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South of God

SOUTH OF GOD

ALSO BY
CEDRIC BELFRAGE

Away from It All: An Escapologist's
Notebook

*I have been reading about Moses
leading Israel from the Egyptland
And since I come to think about it
he had a job on his hand*

*Then Joshua came after him
to lead them into the promise land
And right there at the Jordan
he had a job on his hand*

*And whosoever tries to lead folks
or ever takes a stand
It wont take long to find out
you got a job on your hand.*

—Composed by ADDIE STRONG, sharecropper,
of Earle, Arkansas, about Claude Williams

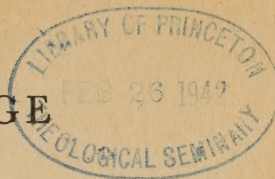


PORTRAIT BY

VIRGINIA DONALDSON

✓
CEDRIC BELFRAGE

W
Claude C. Williams.



SOUTH OF GOD

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SOUTH OF GOD

I

Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees: and Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.—AMOS

The perfect happiness of man cannot be other than the vision of the divine essence.—THOMAS AQUINAS

CLAUDE WILLIAMS took shape in a strong, rich womb of the western Tennessee hill country. Over these sleepy green hills, a roaming-ground for Indians and wild beasts during two centuries of white colonization in North America, the pioneers had scattered thinly. It was not a land flowing with milk and honey, but it was land. The great plantations had spread out across all the fertile bottomlands as slaves increased and multiplied, driving poor independent farmers into the hills.

The hill people, when they settled there, had no visions of becoming wealthy like the slave-owning bottomland planters. They were just hungry for land which they might call their own, because the most precious thing for them was independence. They brought to the land nothing but their hunger and their hands and their God, a benevolent but terrible power in the sky who would keep them from starving if they respected his laws. His Book said that the righteous man did not go hungry, nor the seed of the righteous beg bread.

The land gave them little in return for the toil they put into it from sunup to sundown, but it was theirs. They plowed the land and cultivated it with primitive tools,

and built shacks of the trees they cut down. The problem of keeping alive rose each day with the sun, and toil was the simple answer to it.

Their thoughts groped darkly for God. He had created man and the world in six days, and on the seventh had rested. He had told men what they must and must not do. He had a plan to fulfill, but his ways of fulfilling it were impenetrable.

Claude's father, Jess, was the second generation from the pioneer settlers. Jess was a tall, lean tree of a man who had done all the traveling for the family. At forty he had moved from neighboring Obion County by the Mississippi River, to marry a girl who had inherited some acres in Weakley County, six miles from the little town Greenfield. He was the son of two half-Cherokee Indians which, he said, made him a whole Indian. From the Cherokees he had inherited deep penetrating eyes, high cheekbones, leathery skin, muscular legs with the spring of a deer in them, and great courage, endurance, obstinacy and wit.

"My mammy," he said, "told me I didn't have to be nary bit shamed of my blood because I came by it right. But I'm tellin' you—yes, sir—I'm jist as proud of it almost as if I'd come into a fortune. Why? Because God he jist made the Indian the wittiest man on this earth."

Claude's mother, Minnie Bell, had never been more than a few miles from where she was born. She was a slender, sturdy woman with the rough ways and rich dialect of the hill people. She was handsome and carried herself very erect. She bore Jess' children in the big bed in a corner of the two-roomed shack. For a few days before and after each child came, she took a rest from working with the others in the fields and let up some in the scrubbing, patching and preparing of food. She cooked the cornbread and sowbelly and greens at the wood-stove and served them to the family at the rough-hewn table that

stood between the stove and the big bed. On Sundays she cooked a chicken, but Jess or one of the boys had to chop its head off with the ax, and she looked the other way as the flapping, floundering body spurted its life-blood over the fenceless yard.

She could read and write slowly and painfully. The Bible was her only book and her only guide to conduct; she had never questioned a word of it nor heard it questioned. Like Jess, she could quote from the Book at length, and her highest hope, each time she felt new life in her womb, was that she might produce a son to go out preaching its message.

She was a rarity in Tennessee because she came of a Republican family, though the Republicans were the party of the Northern States and the Civil War was still fresh enough for Jess to remember it well.

"She's got right smart of sense," Jess said, "but it's Republican sense." It amused him, a solid Southern Democrat, to joke about it, but in general a Republican was to him the same thing as a Damyankee. Minnie Bell would spit a piece of chewing tobacco and say, "That ain't right no way. I ain't sayin' I'm Republican. All I say is, I'm for the man that's for the poor folks." But the blood was strong, and she knew she was a Republican till the day she died, though she did not know why.

She was not really interested in politics and the controversy expressed itself mainly between Jess and Claude's maternal uncle Andrew. Andrew, who lived down the road a piece, taught Claude to sing "Yankee Doodle," just to make Jess mad. Jess would not allow a bar of that song to be rendered in his hearing and he taught Claude:

I'm a good old rebel,
And that's just what I am:
I've fought for this fair land of freedom,
And I don't give a damn.

Jess told Claude that a Damrepublican was just a damnigger-lover. That was bad, for one of the earliest lessons Claude learned was that damniggers were not human beings; they were like animals because they had no souls. Proof of this was in the Bible, which "from kivver to kivver," as the preachers said, was God's sacred word. The Devil beguiled Eve, and her firstborn, Cain, had a black mark put on him and went off into the wilderness to found the black race. The Bible, Jess often pointed out, said Thou Shalt Not Kill, but it didn't say Thou Shalt Not Kill a damnigger. They had to be killed once in a while to show them their place.

The facts about damniggers, like the facts about God and heaven and hell and the sacred Book, were basic and not subject to dispute. Claude was well into his teens when he found that damnigger, Damrepublican and Damyantee were not single words. Jess sometimes said he'd as soon kill a damnigger as a dog, but he believed in treating damniggers well as long as they were good damniggers: as long as they knew their place. One of their functions as he saw it was to be the butt for his practical jokes, so he could have a good story to tell and make the boys laugh. Like the time he put the rubber snake in the pocket of the black sawmill hand who was the scarest damnigger of snakes ever you saw. "I thought you was scared of snakes," says Jess to the sawmill hand, "so how come you run around with one in your pocket?" (That velvethead run—I mean *run*. You never saw a damnigger run.)

The damniggers lived mostly in the bottomlands, on the plantations where they worked, but they came and worked around in the hills too. On a rainy morning Jess let two of them into the shack to sit in the dry. Jess joked with them and they laughed shrilly. Their woolly hair fascinated Claude. He wanted to know what it felt like

and as they squatted before the fire he came over and touched their heads with his hand. His hand felt queer and he drew it back and went out to wash it thoroughly with soap. He kept spitting all the rest of the day at the thought of having touched the damniggers. At school he told a friend what he had done. "I can smell those damniggers till yet," he said. It was an expression of his father's, who prided himself on his Cherokee nose being able to smell something dead up a creek at a mile range.

The family was very poor. The only clothes Claude and his brothers had were patched shirts and denim overalls. They went barefoot all through the steamy summers and as long as possible into the winters; then a cheap pair of shoes was bought for each of them on credit at the store. The shoes lasted about six weeks and then the boys went barefoot again. Claude ran wild over the hills and down through the bottom whenever he could slip away. The soles of his feet got so hard he could strike matches on them.

The church of God, a little bitty old shack of a place on the Cumberland Presbyterian circuit, had to be supported however little money there might be for other things. For good or ill the people's lives, as well as their souls' fate after death, lay in the hollow of the Almighty's hand. By bowing down together in lowly recognition of his power, they hoped to avoid calamities. Over the rough lanes from the town, which sometimes in winter were almost impassable, the doctor's buggy came but seldom. There was a woman with some rudiments of midwifery who helped most of the neighbors' babies through the bitter gates of birth. Jess was obstinate on this, and however poor they were he made his wife have the doctor when her time came. The only other time the doctor was called for Claude was when something bit him in the yard and his Aunt Mexico saw a snake going off into the woods. Claude

knew the snake had not bitten him, but he did not say so. Ordinarily Jess doctored the family with slippery elm root, mare's milk and white oak bark stood in water. These physics were most effective when the moon was on the wane, because then the sickness waned with the moon.

Toil was most of life ever since Claude could remember. The family had fourteen acres, and much of that was good only for berries. On the rest of it they could raise almost enough corn, vegetables, hogs and chickens to feed them. There was nothing over and they had to have money for church contributions, clothes, and taxes. Like most of the neighbors, they solved the problem by sharecropping for one of the wealthy bottomland planters, whose right to have others work for them was among God's established laws. The family plowed the planter's fields in winter, planted his cotton and corn in early spring, chopped and hoed the long weary rows through most of the summer and picked cotton in the fall. The cost of ginning the cotton in the planter's gin was supposed to be shared, and after that the planter took most of what the cotton fetched. That was the way of it because the planter had a piece of paper saying he owned the land and other pieces saying he owned money. He had owned the land and tools for so long that by an unwritten law he owned the people. He also had a store, and when the family was penniless long before ginning time, as generally happened, he furnished flour and shoes and other staple needs on credit, at prices far above those in other stores. In this way the family never got much on settling day, although white sharecroppers got more than black because it was less easy to cheat them.

The crop varied with the weather, and the family's cash income for a year's work was sometimes as much as \$200, sometimes less than \$100.

After a good crop Jess vowed Weakley County was

the finest place ever a man seen. After a bad crop he cursed and said there would never another frost fall on his back in Weakley: he had been crazy to think good old Obion could be beat. He cursed good and hard when women-folks were out of hearing, but when his wife was around he generally said "Dad burn it." Jess hated having to work for a planter like some damnigger, but at least he did not have to live in a planter's house, like the bottom-land sharecroppers who could be evicted whenever crops were bad or they wouldn't let themselves be cheated on settling day. There was always pride for the hill people because they owned their own shacks, except of course for the mortgages.

The family sharecropped several miles away, and during most months of the year they left home before daybreak, children and babies and all, in a wagon drawn by a mule-team. The wagon and mules cost Jess \$460: the whole family had to slave just to pay off the interest on this borrowed money, and after years of working the debt off, Jess had to borrow from Claude's aunts to make the last payments. The babies were left by the side of the field while the others worked.

As soon as Claude could wield a hoe, at the age of six, he was given his row of cotton to cultivate and later to pick. It was hard toil, and there was only one half-hour letup all day until the sun sank. The planter's riding boss came by at intervals to see that no one took it easy, and to remind them that they were not working for themselves, but for him whom God had made owner of the land. There was a school year of six months, but before the end of the summer session the children had to get out to pick, and they were still picking when the winter session began. The rickety schoolhouse had but one teacher for all the children, and Claude never got beyond the eighth grade. The children were told about the gal-

lant traditions of the South, the glories of the plantation system and the uncouthness and unscrupulousness of the Northern States in history. The first thing some of the children did to their history books was to punch Abraham Lincoln's eyes out with a pencil.

As well as the life of toil, the theory of Negro animalness, the poverty and the "kivver-to-kivver" Bible faith, Claude inherited a family feud. Feuds handed down from one generation to the next were common in the hill country. In that district it was between the Galeys and Perrys on one side and the Stouts on the other. All three families were kin, descendants of the pioneer Galey who had divided his property among his nine children. Claude's mother was a Galey, and when Jess married her he married into the feud.

"I reckon," she said when they married, "they have feuds ever'where, and have had clean on back to Adam."

The feud had started when Minnie Bell's Pa did better on his share of land than the others did on theirs. The Stouts were bitter about it, and Uncle Spain Perry, out of cussedness, dug a ditch down the middle of the road separating him from the successful cousin. But it was when Bud Smithin, claiming to be a friend of both, stirred up the embers of antagonism between Sam Stout and Uncle Andrew Galey, by repeating what each said about the other, that the shooting started. One day Sam peeped out from behind a bush to get Andy, and Andy saw him first and shot him in the leg. Then Sam winged Cousin Urbin Perry when the Perry kids, on their way to church, started tearing down the fence Sam was building across the road. Later Sam went to stealing the Williams' chickens, corn, and pumpkins. Jess would find goodsbox traps set for his chickens in the woods, and would crush them with his foot. Wakened in the night by the creaking of laths being pried off the corncrib, he

would dash out with his gun and let fly at Sam as he ran. When Jess met up with Sam he said: "If I find ary one more of your traps I'll kill you sure."

The situation was tense, and when Claude's mother would be doing her washing and heard the Stouts cussing her children as they played down in the cornfield, she feared for them. One evening Sam came upon Claude's younger brother when he was out alone, and Sam started for him with a piece of heavy iron, saying:

"I'm goin' to kill you to death."

He was beating the boy up when Jess came along and knocked Sam flatter than water in a road, breaking his finger with the force of the blow. That was how Jess told it to his wife, but when he told the boys about it, showing his broken finger, he explained that he had knocked Sam flatter than piss in a puddle. Jess was proud of what his right arm could do to an enemy. He said it was his Cherokee Indian blood. The Cherokees, he reminded his listeners, were one of the few tribes that fought the whites to the last ditch, preferring annihilation to surrender. He always said the Cherokees could take plenty and not say a thing, but when it came to fighting, they fought. They didn't speak before nor after, but just went to fighting, and they could sure hit a man. They'd kill a man as soon as look at him when it came to fighting and still they'd say nothing: just kill him plum dead and walk away.

Claude's mind was very active. He considered the strange contradictions of life and became preoccupied with religion. He felt sure he was meant to be a preacher, and the whole community accepted that destiny for him, taking pride in him because it was the highest to which a man could aspire. It made Minnie Bell happy and she gave thanks to God for having blessed her womb.

Seeking God, Claude tried to be conscious of him by having the experience, the revelation deep in the soul, that others found. From time to time some traveling revivalist preacher would set up his tent somewhere in the district, and all went to be exhorted anew to let Jesus into their hearts. When the preacher had stirred the people into an emotional fervor with his vivid description of hell's fires, his call for all sinners to repent and take a ticket to paradise, many crowded up to him in a trance-like state to throw off their sins and be converted. It was called hitting the sawdust trail because of the sawdust-strewn floor of the tent.

Claude was eager for this mystical washing of the soul in the blood of the Lamb. When he was thirteen he hit the sawdust trail for the first time in the tent of a preacher named Summers, at Jonesboro. He wanted Jesus badly because he had just sinned against the Holy Ghost and he felt bad inside. Coming out of the tent he overheard the local wit, Pop Pearseed, saying to a crony:

"That's right, all right, heaven's my home. But I ain't homesick."

Claude was ashamed because he thought this funny, and had to laugh. He told himself that his conversion had been wonderful and he was filled with the Lord. At the same time a small voice inside him suggested he did not feel any different.

He continued to seek God ardently. In the fields he built temples of weeds and grass, and prayed there. He prayed morning and night, and read the whole of the Bible and *Pilgrim's Progress*. When he saw the first star in the evening he spat over his left shoulder and made a wish that he would be a fine preacher. Standing on God's earth, he thought of Satan stoking the fires down there below him, and of the approaching end of the world with God coming out of the sky in a pillar of flame,

and he was afraid. He loved the ministers and the preaching, and himself practiced sermons on trees and on his playmates. Sometimes he would stand on the doorstep and preach loudly with his father for audience, but his mother bawled at him to stop because the neighbors would complain. On Sundays after church he was always first to ask the preacher to come home for family dinner.

He had a strong inclination not only toward supernatural things, all the way from the Holy Ghost to haunted houses and belled witches, but also toward doctrinal arguments. Telegraphy and railroading had only a passing glamour. He loved Jesus and the sacred Gospel with his innermost soul. He was full of burning young faith, but instinctively he weighed things he saw against things he was taught, if they seemed to conflict.

He was puzzled by thoughts that came into his head as the family, on the way to work, drove past the big Norton plantation. The Nortons had had the place since before the War, and the mulattoes and octoroons who sharecropped there now testified to the thrifty habits of the pioneer Nortons, who rather than buy slaves on the market had preferred to make them at home. Claude wondered how this enslaving of their own children and children's children worked in with the theory of nigger animalness. White people had souls and black people did not, but these were part white and part black. He searched the Bible in vain for any mention of people having fractions of a soul. He asked Jess about it one day, and Jess said a damnigger was a damnigger any day of the month.

Naturally inquisitive, he ran away from home when he was eleven to see what the world was like, and again when he was thirteen. He only stayed away a few days because he got hungry living on blackberries and there was nothing else to eat. He did not get far enough to see

much, but he found that God's claim to man's first allegiance at all times could be seriously challenged by the claims of the belly. His parents had other things to worry about and carried on with their daily round of toil, waiting for him to return.

He went off again when he was fifteen and stayed away. His cousins, Chall and Fanny Stover, gave him a home at their farm near Martin. The farm, in open rolling country within sight of but one human habitation, had a heavy mortgage on it which the Stovers struggled year by year to lift. It was better land than the Williams', and Chall Stover, determined never to call any man master, was barely able by raising corn-fed hogs to support his family and pay taxes, mortgage commitments, and church dues.

The religion of Jesus was real and important to the Stovers. They were steady, good-hearted, industrious people. Recognizing Claude's gifts, they wanted to help him become a preacher. Claude was wrestling with himself about his future and his soul's salvation. He needed patient and sympathetic handling and plenty of rope. In the neat, bare, scrub-clean farmhouse that was now his home they helped him all they could with such homely wisdom as they had acquired.

Most of all Claude craved paid work and the feeling of being his own master. He was husky and spirited. He could pay for his keep at the Stovers' by doing day labor on neighboring farms. Later he found jobs on the railroad, as a carpenter's and painter's helper, and as coal-passer on the Mississippi River boats. These jobs often took him away for long periods, and he slept many a night with nothing but a barbwire fence for cover. He rode freight trains, sold a little liquor, consumed a little, swore, and slaked a powerful new hunger in the arms of strange women. He wanted to know what life was all

about. He liked the taste and smell of it and at the same time it frightened him. The feeling that God wanted him to be a preacher still persisted. But he no longer wanted to preach, although he went to church and read and discussed the Bible.

At home or away on a job, he never missed revival meetings, and his vitals were torn asunder by the conflicts they set raging in him. He sat on the mourners' bench desperately seeking Jesus. He knew he was a sinner in a man's way now. He wanted to go up there and accept Jesus as others did, but he did not know what to do. People on one side of him on the bench said to him:

"Don't get up till you have it. You'll know when you get it."

And on the other side his Uncle Rollin, who was a pastor and ought to know, said:

"You believe—that, son, you can do. Get up and confess Jesus. God will bless you then, for with the heart man believeth."

Finally he went forward with full heart to surrender himself. A part of him which he could not control flew up and perched on a beam above his head to inspect his soul at this sacred and terrible moment. Nothing was happening. He was just the same. If he was filled with a great light, his own will seemed to have generated it. From outside came nothing. He was standing there and accepting Jesus with his lips and everything was the same. Others around him were singing and moaning with pure spiritual rapture.

He was filled with disillusion, humiliation, and despair. He had followed a voice and it had led him to a stone wall.

He knew now he could not be a preacher. A man had no business preaching if he could not even find Jesus. The strain was too great for him, and he sought about

for some drastic release from the torture of self-recrimination.

In Martin he stopped before an army recruiting sign. It was possibly not God's idea for him, but he was a drowning man and he clutched at it. He rode a freight train to Jackson, where the sign said he could enlist. In a few minutes he knew the relief of signing away the freedom of decision which had cursed him.

It was 1916. They gave him a uniform and sent him to Texas to be trained. He had never been out of Tennessee before except on the river, and it was the first time he had ever ridden a passenger train with his fare paid. His spirit soared.

The camp life was a hard, steady routine into which he easily and contentedly fitted himself. His mind would not stop seeking, in the brief hours of leisure, to pierce the mystery of God and of man. But the mystery did not weigh him down so much, now that he had bargained for that part of his thinking which concerned his belly to be done for him. His delight and interest in the Bible continued to grow and he gave time each day to the study of a Bible correspondence course. The Bible stories were almost more real to him than life itself. More than anything he loved the great saga of Moses leading the children of Israel out of Egypt into the new abundant land.

At the same time he enjoyed life with his senses. His comrades in the camp were high-spirited animals, good fellows, giving most of their spare hours to gambling and sex. They gambled everything they did not spend on women, because their bed and board were secure whatever happened and nobody had to think of the future.

Claude had an uncanny success at the perpetual poker and blackjack games. He could size up the players, and generally knew what they held, just by studying their

faces. He could use his own face as a mask. One time he won a hundred dollars at a sitting and bought himself the finest watch in town. He won so much that he sent fifty dollars home each month for his sister and two young brothers to continue through school. He had good clothes. He could take his comrades' pay and be liked, trusted, and respected by them because of his wit and good nature.

He studied the way men lived and contrasted it with his ideals, especially when he went down into the red-light district. He liked to ask people what they believed.

One young soldier said: "My religion is the religion of the horse—run under the master until you fall."

An old-timer said: "Yes, I believe in God; but damn him, I hate him. He took all my family."

Whenever he had a woman he asked her what she believed.

"What's the use?" most of them said as soon as they understood he was not kidding them. They supposed there was a God somewheres, but maybe the old fellow was blind or deaf or something.

He was moved to St. Paul, Minnesota. One day he was standing in his tent in an undershirt and the Captain came by. He did not know whether to salute, but the Captain said: "I'm going to have to make you a corporal. Read up on your drill regulations."

He read the drill regulations as he had read the Bible, until he knew them by heart. When they moved him to Camp Mead, Maryland, he jumped from First Private to First Sergeant. America entered the World War and he was set to work training conscripts in the arts of slaughtering and being slaughtered for democracy. He was known as the best drill-master in the regiment and the best calisthenics man in the camp.

He was seeing the world and he felt like a real person,

but he wanted to go to France. He tried every way. All the men accepted the statement that the war over there was being fought for democracy, and few stopped to think what this might mean. Times, anyway, were abnormal. Even so, the Southerners revolted against having to salute the colored officers born of the war's urgencies. Claude was strolling along one time with a fellow from Chattanooga when a colored officer approached. Neither one of the pair was willing to be shamed by having the other see him salute a damnigger. The officer stopped and said in a quiet, low voice:

"It isn't me you salute, you know, it's the uniform."

Claude felt abashed for a moment by the man's words, but the fellow from Chattanooga said:

"It isn't the uniform that returns the salute."

They laughed and walked on and did not give the incident another thought.

After great efforts he got himself sent to an Officers' Training Camp to become a Lieutenant. It was the only way he could get to the front. Four days before he graduated as a Lieutenant, the Kaiser gave up.

In 1919 his time in the army was up. When he realized that once again he had to make decisions for himself, he knew that the ministry had never stopped haunting him. The Bible with its challenge to mankind was almost like a drug to which he was a slave.

Unable to face up to the decision, he avoided it by re-enlisting. The army life went on. In 1921 he was twenty-six and once more had to decide upon his future. The ministry attracted and repelled him with equal violence. He had begun to have doubts about that democracy for which the boys had fought, suffered, and died. At Camp Dix, New Jersey, a man who had come back from France with his arm covered with wound-chevrons had said out loud for all to hear:

"I've loved one country, and I'll be damned if I'll ever love another."

The words echoed in Claude's ears, increasing his confusion as to what road he should take. But now a means of escape was offered by the opportunity of an appointment with an English fruit concern in South America. He grasped at it and plans were laid for him and a friend, each with his girl, to take a ship out of New Orleans in the fall.

When less than a month remained, Claude had to make a trip home to say goodby to the folks. He had been living on poker winnings and had \$1,350 in back pay coming to him from the quartermaster. He had bought a cabin trunk and was set to go to South America.

He told the others he would be back in time to join them and make the boat. His girl tried to stop him going home. She was somber, kissing him goodby. She had loved him, and in the transparency of union she had seen the conflict always raging within him.

"I guess South America is off, chief," she said. "You'll never come back."

Claude scoffed, but his excitement over the coming breakaway to South America became a remote thing when he sat again with Fanny and Chall, under the big tree in the farm meadow. Old fires were kindled anew in him. There was a feeling of bedrock in Weakley County, where people humbly and unconditionally accepted the Bible as key to all the mysteries.

Fanny said that she and others of their kin who believed in him had prayed continually for him while he was away. They had never given up their hopes of seeing him in the ministry.

There was a revival meeting going on in Martin. The

crude, emotional message, the direct choice offered between Jesus and eternal fire, exposed within Claude sensitive nerves which he had tried to deaden. God's voice was speaking to him: it was calling him to be up there delivering the message. The voice tortured him. His life in the army, it said—his girl back there, South America—all those things were of Satan.

Another voice was laughing, saying that sex and South America and poker and God must all have their place in life. God or Mammon, the first voice persisted.

At his old home he found the same disturbing pressure. His mother and father had prayed through all the years for their Claude to accept God's appointed work. The family was heavily in debt and \$700 of Claude's money had to go to save their piece of land, which they would soon have lost.

He talked with his kid brother, Jack, who was sixteen and, admiring and wanting to emulate him, had planned to join the army. Instead of reassuring him, Jack seemed also to be part of the conspiracy.

"I don't know about the army," Jack said on the way to church one night. "I know what I ought to do, and I think I know what you ought to do: surrender tonight, enter Bethel School and study for the ministry."

On Sunday Uncle Rollin came by and asked Claude to come for a walk with him.

"I have something to say unto thee," he said. He exhorted Claude and asked:

"When are you going to take up your work?"

"What work?"

"Preaching."

"Never," Claude said.

Uncle Rollin went away without another word, and an hour later was in the pulpit preaching straight at him. At the end of the service Uncle Rollin announced:

"Claude Williams will preach here tonight."

Claude walked out angrily. He would have nothing to do with this. The day wore on and his obstinacy hardened. Uncle Rollin and other neighbors and relatives came by and asked him how he was progressing with preparation of his sermon. They laughed as they spoke to him, as if they were sharing a good joke with God. None of them doubted that Claude would preach.

He could not help being touched by their earnestness and faith and, going out to a sand-ditch, he fell on his knees and prayed.

Nothing happened. From outside, no inspiration, nothing. Uncle Rollin came again, took him for a walk and went through some of the sermons in his sermon book. None of them gave Claude any inspiration. The time for evening service was drawing near.

"You couldn't look worse," Chall said, "if you was fixin' to go to the electric chair."

They went to church. Claude's mind had nothing in it. He knelt there, a big, military-looking chap just out of uniform, bouncing on his knees and feeling like a fool. People crowded in, and he never remembered seeing the church so full. The seats were all taken and people were standing at the back, pressed together.

They were all waiting to see what Claude would do. He felt the mass power of their wish to hear him preach, preach well and be a success. They were good people. They were his people.

He was terribly confused and had no idea what he could say. Sadie Smith was asked to offer a prayer. As she was speaking, Claude suddenly became calm. Into his mind came a text, "Render Unto Caesar," and something he could say about it.

He got up and spoke for twenty minutes, calmly and without hesitation. Then he strode down the aisle and

out into the darkness, determined never to enter the ministry.

But the voice still would not let him be. He thought of all the people there in the church wanting him to be a preacher. He thought of his kid brother wanting to go with him into Bethel. He thought of his girl and the others waiting for him to return and go with them to South America.

After everyone had gone home he returned to the empty church and sat down on the front bench. He stayed there half the night, thinking and praying.

It was nearly dawn when the voice won. He knew there was no peace for him if he avoided it.

He would go into this thing for the truth that was in it. He would never depart from that truth whatever it might cost him.

The hardest task he had ever had was writing to his girl to tell her she was right. Soon afterwards, with his kid brother, he entered Bethel.

II

Beware of the scribes, who desire to walk in long robes, and to have salutations in the market places, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and chief places at feasts; they that devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; these shall receive greater condemnation.—MARK

The trouble with most of us is that we have not sufficient bees in our bonnet to pollinate the flowers of our mind.—CHINESE PROVERB

THE Cumberland Presbyterians were one of the smallest of all Christian sects, but what they lacked in numbers they made up in conviction that they were right. They were a localized sect, and Bethel was the one school they maintained for training young people as guides to the Cumberland Presbyterian heaven.

The poor God-fearing hill folk of the South maintained the school and sent the best fruit of their loins there, because it was God's will that they should do so. They had this obligation toward God because God specially favored their forefathers over a century back. Their forefathers, as Presbyterians, were already steering the right course for paradise. But God chose to reveal to them his displeasure with that part of the Presbyterian creed which upheld predestination and infant damnation. And so they had broken away and established there in the South the truest of the true Church.

Claude had many fellow-students at Bethel. Some were there in obedience to family wishes, or because they saw the ministry as a genteel alternative to toiling on the

land, or because they craved power over the souls of men. Others, like himself, were on fire with God; they had seen in one phase or another the vileness of material conditions, and it had set a light to the tinder of their spirit. Either they had to be consumed by the fire or, in the ministry of their ancestral Church, to become torches in the darkness.

Now that Claude's struggle against entering the ministry was over, he dived into the thing without reservations. He was the most diligent of students. The flower of Cumberland Presbyterian scholarship and piety was there at Bethel to instruct him concerning the correct ethical and theological road to heaven. The country had been surveyed for that road by the prophets from Abraham to John the Baptist, the way through the forest and over the mountains had been charted and cleared by Jesus; the road, still precipitous and rocky, had been rudely surfaced for the elect by Calvin and his dictatorship of the theologians. The King James Bible remained man's only sure guide by which to reach the pearly gates in safety, although there were major sins by Bethel standards which some careless translator or printer had omitted from mention in it.

It was, for example, a broad step toward hell to draw into the mouth the fumes of burning tobacco leaves. The Church official who paid out the monthly twenty dollars of scholarship money to students threatened to withdraw it from anyone who committed this sin. But on some of these finer ethical points Claude quietly took issue with the Bethel authorities, and other students were influenced by him. The devil's odor of tobacco was detected on the breath of some of the students. They were lined up, and the scholarship-money man asked each one if he had been smoking. They stumbled and prevaricated. Claude's turn came to be asked:

"Have you smoked?"

His answer came back brightly: "Smoked."

The scholarship-money man did not seem to know what to say and passed on down the line. Claude was spiritually willing to stop smoking, but he had got the habit.

Plunging into Cumberland theology, he learned why Calvin was wrong to exclude from the chance of heaven those whom God had not predestined to reach it. It occurred to Claude that such a doctrine of salvation for the elect was in any case unsuited to the pattern of American life: a sufficient reason why few authorities even in the mother Presbyterian Church any longer held to it. He was not attracted by Calvin's sternness towards the poor, but he responded eagerly to the Church Father's assaults upon the rich. It was here that he wanted to take his stand, beside Moses and Amos and the prophets of old, chastising with fire and scorpions those who sought a golden paradise for themselves on earth.

He studied the Bible for hours each day, with relation to those tortuous theological problems to which only Presbyterians held the divine key. Loving the God whose face the theologians guarded behind these veils of mist, Claude saw him most clearly when theology was in abeyance and he looked with simple eyes at simple physical things. He saw God at the altar, and in the green sighing trees that clothed the hills, and in Joyce King.

Joyce had come to Bethel to study to be a Cumberland Presbyterian missionary. She was small, quiet, with thick gold hair. Her face was modeled in strength and tenderness. She was a descendant of the patriarch King who with Ewing and McAdoo had led the breakaway of the Cumberlanders from the mother Church. It had been decided long ago for her that she should go to Bethel and be a missionary, and she had said little about it. She sel-

dom said much. Like Claude, she had the passion to seek God, but her mind worked independently and she had developed ideas on where God might be found which would have startled the Kings.

As she got to know Claude and studied with him, her mind strained upward and she felt herself groping for a new window through which, if she might open it, God would more shiningly appear. Claude stimulated her by his native wit and when he talked of his experiences and thoughts. His impetuous idealism was something of which she had need, not only for her own development, but also so that she, with her calmer perception, might help direct it. Their minds became interlocked by the need each had for the other, and the fusing brought ease-ment and clarity. In the spring they went out quietly and were married. They laughed together most of that day, and went on the train to Martin to spend the night with the Stovers. When they returned next day they took a bare little room near the school, and on their first night there they set up a family altar and prayed to God. They told God that they had no money on which to marry, but had not let that stand in the way, because the marriage was dedicated to God who had said the laborer was worthy of his hire.

When the old men who ruled Bethel heard about the marriage, they frowned and conferred together. They called Claude in to tell him they disapproved of what he had done. It was irregular and disruptive because, as Claude's wife, Joyce would no longer be able to take up the missionary duties for which they were training her. It was also upsetting to the morale of the school. If young men studying for God's ministry could not exercise control over the flesh, the future was black indeed. The time for such things was when students had graduated into the ministry and were settled. Claude had no income on

which to support a wife. What would he do when Joyce had a baby?

To confirm the attitude they were taking, the old men reached for their Bibles. But man for man Claude could outdraw anyone on Bibles, as he could at stud poker. He flashed out his texts and made a speech, confounding the old men by his fire and will.

He said that God had made him as he was, and the right to marry when he was ready was given him by God. He accepted the old men's right to tell him about theology and morals, but that was all. If there were to be dictation in such matters as this, when no moral law had been broken, he would request to be dismissed from Church and Presbytery and the ministry would have to do without him.

He had the gift of tongues and the Cumberland Church had little of such talent to draw upon. The old men discussed the incident for several days and decided it was best forgotten about.

But Claude was unable to forget it. His Church must live up to his ideals. He was conscious of something at the very base of his ideals which the old men had struck at, something stronger than the old men or any human institution. That was the hatred, mixed into his Cherokee-American blood, of imposed top-down control. He took it from God, but he was not aiming to take it from men. He was not a boy sowing wild oats. It was the basic rights of a twentyseven-year-old American over which the elders of Bethel wanted mastery.

He came to Joyce and told her about it hotly, as if striving to convince her of something in which she could hardly be expected to go all the way with him. He wanted her to see this thing just as he did: not merely as a personal grievance but as a fundamental issue.

"Perhaps they're right," she might say. "Maybe we

ought to have been more patient. They are the leaders of our Church and we ought to submit ourselves to their guidance."

She did not say it, and he saw that he ought to have known her better. She agreed that the Cumberland Presbyterians were too narrow and exacting. She did not think it was the right field for them. They would do better in the wider field of the mother Presbyterian Church.

Claude on his knees thanked God for Joyce. The wider goal spurred him to new zeal in his studies. It was hard to carry on at Bethel now because he had Joyce to support and there was hardly any money left. But they did some powerful praying and it generally seemed to work. One time they were scared that Joyce was going to have a baby. They prayed without stopping until nearly midnight that she should not have one. Later that same night God sent the answer.

They also prayed for a summer job for Claude to carry them through between semesters. By chance he heard one day that there was a call for a few old army men to go to Camp McClellan, Alabama, as commissioned summer instructors. He wrote in his application and then they went to praying again. They were penniless when a letter came summoning him to the camp. He found there that several hundred applications had been received, and he was filled with awe and gratitude toward God.

The pay was just enough to keep the home going and put by a little. The rookies at the camp spent their spare time gambling, and when Claude saw them he had to walk away to stop himself joining in. The rookies gambled even their socks and shirts when they had no cash. They were green gamblers. Claude could have taken their pants, but he was forced to stop himself. He

was going into God's ministry, starting a new life. He had dedicated himself to God.

It was a bargain he had made with God, and God certainly kept his side of it. When it was announced that a few of the instructors would be kept on a month longer, and Claude heard the other men saying they had tried to fix it for themselves with this or that Colonel, he went right to God with it. He prayed to God in his bunk.

"God," he said, "I'm not going to any Colonel about this thing, though you know I need this extra month powerful bad. I'm going to the King of the Universe. I'm putting it up to you."

Next day the list of those men to be kept on was displayed, and Claude's name was fifth on it.

He was broke again at the end of a year at Bethel. There was nothing to do but raise a \$475 loan on Jess' land which Claude's \$700 had saved from seizure the year before. They prayed for Joyce to get a job teaching school where Claude could be near her, so as to pay the loan off. A vacancy came up in a school less than a mile from Bethel, and Joyce got it.

They struggled through winter and spring, and Claude's ardor at his studies never cooled. Summer came and again he applied for the camp job, and prayed to God. A few days later a letter of acceptance came from Washington. Claude figured he and Joyce and God were on good terms.

In 1924 he finished his studies at Bethel and applied for a pastorate with the mother Church, the U.S.A. Presbyterian. He went to praying for a pastorate which would pay him enough to raise a family on and would allow him to continue his studies.

He had talked with other students about the narrowness of the Cumberlanders, and many of them followed him into the mother Church. It was not in Claude's na-

ture to forget the way the old men of Bethel had tried to interfere with his marriage.

Claude had broken the Cumberland gate down and the sheep were straying. It was a revolution in a small way. It looked as though the Cumberland Presbyterians would be between a rock and a hard place for new preachers.

The U.S.A. Presbyterians were impressed by their ardent, intelligent, likeable recruit who was so well versed in doctrine. He had the makings of a fine preacher. They nominated him to the elders of a group of churches around Auburntown, not far from Nashville in middle Tennessee. The congregations of these churches estimated his value to their souls' health at \$1,800 a year. It was just the job he wanted.

He came to Auburntown with a high spirit, feeling that now he was really right with God. He had surrendered himself to God and the road ahead had been cleared for him. He had been put in the way of a worldly success which involved no compromise with his ideals but actually coincided with them. The exhausting conflict that had raged within him for so long seemed to have been happily resolved.

Full of Jesus, he was sobered by the sacredness of his mission in Auburntown. He placed a special guard on his tongue and did not laugh so much, even with Joyce. Joyce, too, was more serious in her manner. She was proud of him, and the slumbering of that earthy, independent, impulsive Claude, the Claude that had been touched off like a firecracker by the old men of Bethel, did not seem important. This Claude which was so much of the personality she loved was still there, glowing beneath the earnest face. She shared the secret of it with God.

For Claude the small, primitive Tennessee towns of Auburntown, Watertown and Lebanon were a garden of souls to which God had given him the key. He gave himself without reservation to his charge. Soon he was familiar with the details of his work: the day-long program of Sunday services at his six churches, the Sunday School, the funerals and baptisms. He applied himself to winning the friendship and confidence of the elders and church members, and in this he succeeded. It was not hard for him because he was grounded in the right beliefs, and he naturally loved people and looked for the best in them. His sermons were admired and there was nothing in them to offend the devout. His mastery of the Bible, which he could quote without hesitation on the most remote themes, astonished his hearers. He preached on doctrinal themes, and sent the members home comfortably assured that by being Presbyterians they had their money on the right horse.

Other sects operated in the district, including Cumberlanders and the third Presbyterian sub-sect, the Southern or U.S. Presbyterian Church. All accepted the basic truths: the personal God and Devil, the Genesis story of creation, the physical heaven above and hell beneath, the complete infallibility of the Bible. If water was liquid, if grass grew upward, these things were true. It was on finer points of interpretation and ceremonial that differences existed, and here there were opportunities for Claude's aggressive, searching mind, his powerful, eloquent tongue, to work.

The Campbellites believed a Christian could be saved only by total immersion in water. The Baptists thought that without immersion he might conceivably dodge hell, but they doubted it. Beyond this there were dissensions as to whether he should be pushed in the water forwards, backwards or sideways. The Presbyterians said sprinkling

was good enough in the eyes of the Almighty, though they would duck a man in the river if he insisted.

The question was fundamental and grave. Every citizen of Auburntown, Watertown and Lebanon was destined to spend all eternity either in unspeakable bliss or in unimaginable torment, and on his decision as to being immersed in the river his fate might depend. It was no subject for the mere crossfire of bald assertions from one pulpit to the other. Claude saw it as his plain duty to make a public, detailed examination of all the evidence, so that God's desire in the matter should no longer be in doubt for men of good will and open minds.

He went to second-hand bookstores in Nashville and collected twentyfive books on baptism. He could not have found them in his own parish, where the Bible was the beginning and end of literature, no other books being clear of suspicion that Satan might have had a hand in their authorship. He studied the books with persistence and combed the Bible for every reference to the subject. Finally he gathered so much material on baptism that, when he was ready to present his findings to the congregations, it took eight Sundays of sermons to cover the ground.

The Bible, he said, nowhere laid down immersion as an obligation to those seeking heaven. He quoted the authorities until his hearers were gasping at such a display of learning in one so young. Winding up with flashes of rhetoric, he asked what would happen if a man got religion at the North Pole or in the middle of the desert. God would certainly not make such a hard condition as to insist that the faithful should risk pneumonia. Nor did he expect them to be magicians, for he had provided no rivers or lakes at all in great stretches of the world.

The controversy that was stirred up by this surpassed in violence anything the oldest inhabitants could remem-

ber. To his Church members Claude was a Presbyterian hero, and they went about praising his courage, wit and erudition. He re-baptized all his own church members who had been immersed in error. Some Baptists, convinced that their immersion baptism was a mistake, that they had been deceived and were sinners, came to him for a sprinkling and breathed again.

Campbellite and Baptist preachers, knowing nothing but the Bible and that not well, poured scorn on Claude's twentyfive books. The wise young Presbyterian pastor had been led astray by the Evil One, they said, and from their pulpits they passionately unchurched him, saying he was no longer to be considered a Christian. Claude's post-office box was filled with anonymous letters hinting at his connections with the underworld.

"You can prove it with all the books you like," said one letter, "but something just tells me it ain't right." The text favored by the correspondents was Matthew vii. 13: "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction." If Claude were right in his claim that three-quarters of all Christians believed in sprinkling, then these correspondents were proud to belong to the other quarter and choose the narrow gate.

Most of the people conceded Claude the victory. He was pleased with the way he had forced truth into the light. After their first counterblasts the Baptists and Campbellites never mentioned the subject again.

He had won himself a reputation for miles around as a scholar and an orator. With the elders of his churches he stood high. The elders were successful and pious business men, and they felt that the day they took Claude as their minister they did a smart stroke of business for God. They invited Claude and Joyce to dinner at their homes. Claude bought a car and started paying on a life-insurance policy, and he knew the taste of success.

He liked the taste at first, but it began to get a little flat. Some of his elders were good honest folk, but at certain of the churches there were elders whose worldliness and hardness of heart shocked him, now that he saw more intimately into their lives.

By scoring a point over their Church rivals he had won their favor. But they were not really interested in the truth. Their Christianity was a dress they put on when it served their purpose. They took advantage of their moneypower to force the poor to work for starvation wages, and then they salved their consciences with niggardly charity. They were self-indulgent, and practised in secret the fleshly sins their lips condemned. As he faced them and smiled with them across their well-laden dinertables, with Joyce sitting quietly near him, he wondered what Calvin would have thought and said of their usuries, what Jesus would have thought and said of their hypocrisy. He wondered whether by not challenging their own estimate of themselves he was standing right with God. The matter began to worry him because he knew they had great power over him. They had given him his thirtyfive dollars a week, and they could take it away.

A result of this emerging contempt for some of the leading pillars of the Church was that he felt, for the first time in his life, a gleam of sympathy for the colored people. There were many of them around Auburntown, mostly laborers dependent on casual work at mean wages, existing without the barest decencies in landlords' cabins, subject to the whim of owners and elements. If a storm came it blew them out, if the owner came he threw them out. A few of them did menial housework in the town for good churchpeople. They were segregated in every public place according to Southern custom, so that they might never forget their subhuman standing.

These pillars of his churches were not the first white men Claude had seen abusing blacks. He had grown up in the Jim Crow South, and had always accepted the white man as lord of creation, the black as a natural-born slave. But the hypocrisy of which some of the church elders were capable was so striking that if they treated a man like a dog, Claude found himself, out of sheer cussedness, looking for qualities in that man superior to the canine. Devout churchgoers were first to commend the lynching of blacks suspected of relations with white women. The same people often amused themselves in the old slave-owner way with colored girls.

There was an old black man who came every Sunday to one of Claude's churches, where he was allowed to sit in the back row. Claude, preaching, glanced often at the old man's deeply-lined face. There was a quality there, a decent earnestness, which Claude found sympathetic by comparison with the blandness of the well-to-do hypocrites in his flock.

One Sunday he went to the door at the end of the service to shake hands with the congregation as they left. He shook the old black fellow's hand first of all, and asked him his opinion of the service. The old man was surprised, and took the outstretched white hand with a hesitant smile. Claude had never shaken a black hand before. It felt queer, and he had to control the instinct that it was unclean, but he did the same thing each Sunday after that. The church members were abashed to see one of their color shake a black man's hand, but they did not like to say anything, because as a minister of God he was specially privileged. Though there were good Christians among them, it had not occurred even to them that race equality was possible. Claude was conscious of a personal satisfaction in thus advancing the Christian idea. He felt he had made a small but definite stride.

The colored people were very devout, but they had only a tottering schoolhouse in which to worship God among themselves. One Sunday, after he had ministered all day in his own churches, Claude went down to the schoolhouse. Many white people, attracted by the rare event of a white man preaching to colored, had come there. They expected to be amused by the niggers worshipping God in their primitive and ignorant way.

The schoolhouse was a shack in the final stage of decay, leaning drunkenly over to one side, so that it would have fallen flat on the ground like a house of cards if poles had not been set to prop it up. The whites sat on one side of the aisle, wearing their tolerant smiles. The blacks, who had been waiting there nearly all day, were jammed into the other side. The black women had little black babies in their laps, sleeping. Claude walked up on to the rickety rostrum, and a big colored man shook his hand.

"Whom we've been waitin' fer so long," he said in a booming voice, "has now came."

A titter danced over the white half of the congregation. Claude was conscious of the humor, but somehow did not want to laugh. He had come not knowing what he would say. He looked around and the text came to him, "What think ye of Christ?"

He said that people could not think much of Christ if they let his house fall down as this one was about to do. He spoke eloquently and simply, and the sad eyes of the black people became liquid.

Finally he took the collection plate and, placing two dollar bills in it, said that he expected every person there to give at least a dollar. If they did not have it, they should borrow it or pledge it.

The black people came up one after the other and placed each a dollar or a pledge in the plate, as Claude led the hymn "Let the Will of the Lord Be Done." They

were very poor, and for many of them the dollar meant that they must go hungry, or without shoes.

Claude turned to the whites and said:

"You see what these people think of their Christ. What do you think of your Christ? I want to see every white man give at least two dollars."

They had seen a new kind of earnestness there and were impressed. They all gave what was asked.

After the collection was made the black people, thinking it was a miracle they had seen happen, burst into spontaneous thanksgiving to God with overflowing hearts. Claude was held by the strange quality and intensity of it. It was a kind of worship that he had never heard in a white church. He thought how acceptable it must be to God. It made him think of birds and wild creatures as a man might overhear them in the depth of some forest: each creature glorifying God in its own way, unco-ordinated with the others, yet the whole chorus of sounds blending into a symphony by the very nature of their spontaneity.

Within a few days work began on repairing and re-roofing the schoolhouse. Stirred by the experience, Claude felt that God was closer to him than ever before. A Baptist preacher, seeing it as a challenge, went down to preach to the black people next Sunday, but on the Monday went about saying that they were ungrateful and hopeless. He did not seem to have been a success, and Claude thought he knew why. The Baptist had talked in the time-honored way of Southern whites addressing the inferior race: with banter and condescension, which only served to make the listeners conscious of the white man's consciousness of his superiority.

It gave Claude the same satisfaction that had been his when in army days he won a big hand at poker. He had lost only a little of the deeply-planted physical repulsion

for blacks, but beside it a new idea of them was growing. The cadences of their group-worship would long remain with him.

Some of his elders counted his eccentric behavior towards the colored people against him. But his standing remained high because all realized how his exceptional gifts distinguished their churches and testified to their acumen.

Now that they were established, Claude and Joyce had stopped praying not to have a baby and were praying every night that they might have one. God was still on the watch for them. The womenfolk of the churches, who had never quite been able to figure Joyce out, became suddenly interested in their pastor's family life when her time approached.

There had been no change in her behavior during the time of waiting. She had carried on with everything just as usual, except for the time she gave in the evenings to reading books about motherhood. Then, early on a Sunday morning, Claude woke up and Joyce said she thought maybe something was happening. She had everything put by very neatly in drawers, ready for the occasion, and told Claude to get this and get that. He dressed and went after the doctor, and when they came back Joyce was lying there rather pale and a baby girl was already born.

After service that day all the women gathered in groups and hummed like a swarm of bees:

"Preacher's had a baby."

There was something special to them about a preacher having a baby, and they looked Claude up and down as he stood before them, with a queer appraising look on their faces. They came in great numbers to the house to see what the preacher's baby might be like. They did not pay so much attention to Joyce, but they stared and stared at the baby as if it had been produced by some new and

remarkable method. It got so that after a few days Claude had to post a sign outside: "PLEASE DO NOT VISIT."

It was Claude's third year in Auburntown when Billy Sunday came to Nashville for a lightning harvest of souls. He was a big-time reaper, and did not have a tent, but had a special tabernacle built for him. Claude and Joyce were among the many from around Auburntown who went to hear him.

Billy Sunday grasped thousands of people in the mighty grip of his oratory and wrested them away from Satan by main force. Claude was set on fire, not only as a man with a soul to be saved, but as a preacher entrusted with saving the souls of others. He clipped the reports of Sunday's sermons from newspapers and studied them. They became part of him.

He said to himself: Here is a real gogetter. He isn't interested in petty details of doctrine. He goes right to the roots. He cusses them out for listening to the voice of Satan, for yielding to the flesh and coasting blindly towards the fire that is not quenched. He tells them the day of the Lord is at hand, and if they don't accept Jesus in their hearts right now, and stop gambling and drinking and whoremongering, there will be no heaven for them. He isn't afraid to use long and lusty words, but he forces even the simplest to understand them. He entreats, but he also threatens. And folks hear the voice of God through him not in tens, but in thousands. They go up there to be converted, and they go away to lead true Christian lives.

The more Claude thought about Billy Sunday, the more ashamed he became of how little he had accomplished. He knew that the people of his churches were full of sin. God had little real foothold in Auburntown, Watertown and Lebanon. The people heard with their

ears, but not with their hearts. They came to church, sat in the amen corner, cried and snooted around, but anyone would be asking for a shock who followed them at night to see what they did.

And it was his responsibility. It was for him to force them to hear. It was time he raised some good constructive hell around there.

In the long watches of the night he castigated himself. He had been slipping into the easy road, that was the truth of the business. He had been preaching too much doctrine, too much theory about right and wrong ways of baptism, instead of driving a straight and uncompromising message to the souls of his flock. It was easier that way because nobody got hurt: nobody but God.

He talked it over with Joyce, and she seemed pleased with what had happened to him. The old fire was in him again: the fire that when it blazed up in him, as it did at Bethel, had no fear what it might singe. It might not be the safest road that he was choosing, she thought. Folks liked to hear a Billy Sunday occasionally, to be told brutally about their sins and enjoy the sensation of purging themselves. But Billy Sunday was like a circus, here today, gone tomorrow. Some of Claude's church members would soon begin to look uncomfortable if their sins were held up to the public view every time they went to worship. She knew Claude's tongue and how it could sting when God had the roots of it in his hand.

Now the Presbyterian preacher's Sunday messages swept through the congregations like a forest fire. His reputation spread. He was a preacher who hadn't got no sugartit for nobody, people said. They held on to their seats when he went to preaching, and there were those who declared he started where Billy Sunday left off.

One of his first and bitterest indictments was of him-

self. He declared himself a grievous sinner before all the people.

"By the fear of losing his job or the approval of his audience," he cried, "the preacher has been ensnared into preaching a soft-sounding gospel which was born in hell. The Church has been writing 'Christianity will solve the world's problems,' but it has been writing with the charcoal of compromise on the blackboard of hell. We spew and spit, quarrel and cuss and damn about theological propositions which are not clearly set forth, and absolutely ignore the plain teaching of God's word."

Sinners of all kinds sat motionless before him, realizing with dull pangs that they were more interested in satisfying their physical instincts than in assuring themselves reservations in paradise. It was uncomfortable, and yet for many it was sweet pain to be thus magnificently chastised. The preacher got to going so fast that he interpolated passages he had heard Sunday use, and soon he no longer knew whether it was Sunday or Williams:

"We see about us today men who will not be men and women who will not be women. The man adopts feminine gestures, paints his lips, powders his face and waxes his eyebrows, and if his feet were not so big, hands so coarse, features so rough and beard so long, he would put on a dress. If there is anything more contemptible than a sissy man, more abominable in the sight of God, it is a buddy woman. You see them today in politics, on platforms, with shingled hair, breeches on, coarse-voiced, adopting the coarse phrases of men. But God gave you men a big physique and tough hide to do things consistent with your nature, and you women a small physique and tender flesh to wait on man and do things consistent with your nature. God made the rooster to crow and the hen to cackle, and the very minute that the hen jumps on a post and crows, that minute her head comes off and

she goes into the dinnerpot. It would be for the good of the universe, human society, civilization and the Kingdom of God if women who are trying to be men had their heads chopped off. So with the men.

"I am talking to all you women. I am talking to that creature of fashion who is anything that style says to be. If style says, 'Be a man,' you do it; if it says, 'Bobbed hair,' or 'Shingled hair,' or 'Short dresses,' or 'No clothes at all,' you would do it. You are in style today, and if some of you were to exchange what you have on for a bathing suit you wouldn't get cheated out of a yard of goods. If men were to go down the streets with as few clothes on as some of you women, their faces would burn and blush with shame.

"There is not an honest interpretation of the Bible this side of hell that will justify a woman in bobbing her hair or wearing breeches. There is not a Bible school in America that will tolerate bobbed hair. As long as you prefer to follow fashions which are contrary to God's word you think more of the world than of God. And as long as you prefer to break God's gushing heart to being called odd, you have not love of God in your heart and will go to hell as sure as you die.

"Another way in which professing Christians are compromising with the world is by dabbling in politics. The Devil is the ruler of the present world system, and I can prove it to you.

" 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers of this world.'—Ephesians Six, Twelve. If the Devil is not the ruler, why do we wrestle against him?

"Politics are corrupt, have always been corrupt and shall continue to be so. Do you know that in the Constitution of this 'Land of the Free' God is not recognized from one end to the other? It is a question with me

whether any Christian should entangle himself in any way in politics.

"We Church members must keep ourselves unspotted from the world. If the women—and I say women because, God bless you, you are the backbone of the Church, but since you compromised with the world the Church has lost ground—of this church will refuse to condescend to vote, this church will have a power that it don't have now. The question is whether you had rather vote than to use your influence for God. If politics and fashions are more important than the Kingdom of God, go ahead.

"If some of you women were to go up to the gates of heaven with breeches on and your hair shingled, with coarse phrases and political terms, Peter would have to ask you whether you were a woman or a man before he could judge you. When God gave woman the privilege of being a mother he gave her the opportunity of rendering the greatest service of any created being. If every normal woman would be the mother of six children, her children six, grandchildren six, great grandchildren six, great great grandchildren six, great great great grandchildren six, she would be the mother of 55,985 children. And if there were two preachers in each family, and each preacher were to save only a hundred souls in all his life, she could sit down in heaven and wait for 5,598,600 human souls to come to heaven by the direct influence of her offspring.

"Now I am going to talk to you men. You have been sitting there very comfortable. I'm going to make some of you get under the seat.

"Fifty per cent of you are religious cowards. Why don't you pray in public? It would scare you to death to hear your own voice in prayer. There's men here who have been Christians for years and have never spoken to another man about their soul. And why don't you speak

to that sinner? You are afraid of what somebody will think, say or do. Nobody has ever spat in your face, torn the beard from your face, or crucified you. They did Christ. Is your hide more precious? You are cowards.

"I would not give a snap of my finger for a man's chance for heaven who won't pray in his family. He don't have enough to carry him to heaven. The same is true of a man who won't pray in public. Oh yes, you can talk to a man about anything else—holler murder, spit ho'made tobacco juice ten feet. Some of you men are the Devil's ideal. If my father had wanted to choose hell for me, I would have told him to go to hell if he wanted to—I was going to heaven.

"Do you know why some of you men are not Christians? You are not men enough. You are not men enough to walk down the aisle and take God, tell the world. God will knock some of you into the Kingdom with the butt end of a coffin.

"Jesus Christ is the only being in all the universe that can give us happiness. We thought we could find happiness in force—in law—in intellectual training—in drink—in the lusts of the flesh. We thought we could find happiness in gold, authority, culture, learning, but none of these gave us happiness. These have never spoken, 'Peace, be still,' to any soul. The only alternative, my Christian friends, is to turn around and do the opposite of what we have been doing. We must conquer our instincts instead of follow them, struggle with our natures instead of justifying them, accept Christ and live his principles instead of following the allurements and dictations of Satan.

"The Devil is no wild fancy of the imagination. He is a person. You either admit that or you make the Holy Spirit a liar. Will any intelligent person suppose that an everlasting fire has been prepared for an abstract principle of evil? Nonsense! 'The Devils also believe and

tremble.' Can an abstract principle believe and tremble? The Devil does not come to us with horns and a tail, because he has power to deceive men. He may be the prettiest woman you ever laid your eyes upon or the most clever and soft-talking man.

"Satan has gained the greatest victory in America today that he has gained since Columbus touched New England shores in '92. More than a dozen churches have been torn down within the last year and theatres built in their place. The Gods of this world are being served, the God of heaven is being forgotten. It's one continual story of decayed morals, absent modesty, damned souls.

" 'Therefore hell hath enlarged itself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory and their multitudes, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth shall descend into it.' The majority of vice and crime in the United States is committed by beardless boys and girls in their 'teens. In 1900 the average girl who went wrong was twentyfour. In 1910 it was twenty, in 1915 it was sixteen, and today it is thirteen or fourteen.

" 'Why is this so? Because of home conditions. Who is to blame? Women? A thousand times no! Blame the men. It's because the men of America have not personality, individuality and firmness enough to govern homes. Man has only one place in the home—and all hell and modern theories, conceptions, customs and practices cannot change his right of place. That place is to govern and provide for the home.

" 'But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of every woman is the man and the head of Christ is God.' God said it. I didn't. If it is wrong, blame God. If it is right and you go over it, and you and your children go to hell, blame yourself. I have cleared my skirts.

"This harum-scarum, bolshevik, everybody-boss-and-

nobody-boss condition has gone on in the homes of America till vice and crime are reigning supreme in the hearts of children. Women will turn a babe over to some heathen Japanese, Chinese or African nurse while they attend to their political position, although there is only one place for women—in the home. She doesn't have time to look after her child, but she has time to lead her big collie, shepherd or hound to the office every day, wash and comb that nasty whelp's wool, while her own babe, her own flesh and blood, is being denied of a mother's caress and love which would mellow its little life once for all. Do you tell me God has no hell for a heathen like that?

"You can find rebellion against God in our own pulpits. Jesus is not divine—he didn't rise from the dead—the Bible is not the word of God. Infidelity is sapping the life of the institutions of our land. Seventyfive per cent of university and college professors endorse the evolution theory. They deny the infallibility of the Scriptures and laugh at the idea of hell and the danger of souls being lost. What are you going to do about it?

"We must put on the whole armor of God. We must put it on against the Rome Antichrist. 'He shall come out of the pit, set up a kingdom and demand to be worshipped.' That can be none other than the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church, governed not by principle but by patronage, is a great political machine in the market ready to swing its voting power for place, position and opportunity to advance the interests of Rome. It is the only Church that has an organized and trained army, called the Knights of Columbus. Why should a Church want an army? You know the oath of the Knights of Columbus: 'Any time the Pope speaks the word we will resort to arms.' Every President that has been killed was killed by a Catholic. President Harding

openly denounced the Knights of Columbus, and died one year after. Of course they plan eventually to move the Pope here.

"When Robert Bruce lay dying, he turned to the Earl of Douglas and said: 'When I am dead I wish you would take my heart out and place it on the sepulcher of my Saviour at Jerusalem.' When Bruce died, Douglas surrounded himself with a troop of brave men, removed the heart of Bruce and started for the Holy Sepulcher. They were attacked by Moors, and were about to get defeated, when Douglas took the casket of gold containing Bruce's heart, waved it above his head, hurled it into the ranks of the enemy and cried: 'Lead on, heart of Bruce, lead on!' They leaped to their swords, and with screams and yells they cut, sliced and hewed their way to victory, seized again the heart and carried out the request.

"Tonight I wave this cross of Jesus Christ above my head to throw it out into this audience and cry: 'Lead on, Cross of Christ, lead on!'

"Will you let the devil trample it under his feet, or will you put on the whole armor?"

As he came to the climax, Claude used his Bible as a sword, lunging out at his fascinated audience and raising his voice to a shrill cry. At the end he hurled the Bible down the aisle, and the people gazed at it, spellbound.

"If he ain't the preachin'est man," people said as they gathered outside for a good-night chat.

III

To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice.—JOHN

The slave who becomes conscious of his slavery has already half ceased to be a slave.—LENIN

SEEKING conference night and morning with the Almighty on strategy for the war against sin, Claude wore skin off his knees; his strong, well-rounded face became leaner, and through the glasses of which they now had need his eyes seemed always to be searching.

The conferences were too one-sided to satisfy him. When, after a great effort of concentration, he heard a dim voice speaking in his head, he could not be sure whether it was God or something his imagination had put there.

Sometimes he felt that God was drawing away or expanding, so that he had to chase after him. It was a queer feeling to have, because the first principle of God was that he was eternally fixed, but it persisted.

He regretted the time he had spent arguing with Baptists and others. Life was too short, hell too horribly near. Even Catholics, for all the criminal errors of Popery as an institution, might hear and be saved by a broad message uniting all against Satan. This was the kind of message God wanted him to give. He was certain of it, and his certainty rang out in his voice. Yet just when he had full steam up and was preaching hellfire on all cylinders, the

little devil part of himself flew up into the rafters and jeered at him.

When that happened he re-examined himself for errors, which he was not ashamed to admit because he had to keep in right with God. He urged broader and broader tolerance in Church relationships.

"There are followers of Christ in all Churches," he said. "If a man says, We and only we are right, he is following Churchanity and not Christianity. He that believeth Jesus is the Christ is born of God. He that is born of God cannot sin."

The text was not to be disputed, but it was a new line of talk to come from an Auburntown pulpit. It seemed to some of the elders that Claude was heading for dangerous waters. He had almost abandoned the doctrinal issues.

It was their Presbyterian duty to reason with him, but he was a hard one to talk to. He was so determined, and there could be no doubt of his sincerity. He took no high-handed attitude in defense of his ideas and he seemed able to prove anything he wanted by the Bible. Sometimes he quoted passages that the elders did not believe were in the Bible at all until they looked them up.

Christian women in Auburntown, Watertown and Lebanon continued to bob their hair and dabble in politics, and the disposition of the men to pray out loud in public or wrestle with their friends' souls did not noticeably increase. Confused, Claude tried to widen the field of his search for God. He might prescribe more successfully for the disease of sin, he thought, if he saw the world picture less narrowly. His parish in Tennessee was a microcosm. To understand why men resisted the divine in them on Main Street, it was necessary to understand why nations fought against God in their councils and on the battlefields.

He had always been interested in statistics, and he took

to clipping from newspapers reports and figures which seemed significant of basic human conduct. He tried to piece them together to make a pattern, but this only increased his confusion. He saw a world more filled with sin and hatred than it had been before ten million men were crucified to make it better. There was a stench pervading all the air: he could smell a mice, but could not locate it. Others were content that God was beyond understanding. Claude's yearning to understand him only grew.

Preaching on the World War and its results he said:

"If we could get the world to follow Jesus we would have no need of jails, penitentiaries and officers of the law. One sentence of Christ's would illuminate all: 'Do unto others as ye would that others would do unto you.' If the world had followed Jesus, there would have been no war."

Afterwards he wondered how many thousands of preachers, Sunday after Sunday, in every part of the world, repeated that message. He had to laugh gloomily at himself. The preachers repeated it like chattering monkeys, and the people who paid to have it repeated to them did not alter their conduct at all, nor did they grow one inch in the stature of wisdom.

The individual man and woman were so frail; something was needed which would reach beyond that frailty. He thought of the hundreds of sinners into whom he had felt the spirit entering under his very hands, at the climax of his revivals. Those people, stirred by his preaching into an ecstasy of repentance, were sincere when they washed their souls at the altar in the blood of the Lamb. They wanted to follow Jesus.

Wanted, but did not. It was too easy to say that following Jesus was the key to the riddle. But what kind of key was it if it was no more than a form of words? God was

all-powerful over men. His denial to them of the wisdom and strength they needed almost seemed to suggest that he gloried in consigning millions to hell.

Continuing to lash all sinners of his flock impartially with his official tongue, Claude found increasingly that his heart was only in the work as far as the comfortable well-to-do were concerned. There was no condemnation in his heart for the failings of the poor. He clean parted company with Calvin at that point. No poor deserved greater compassion than the American poor, the poor of the dark South, because America's reputation for general prosperity made everyone act as if the poor did not exist, or, if they did, had no right to do so.

All through his life he had seen for himself the mean living conditions and the nerve-fraying insecurity of the mass of the people. And he began to wonder whether preaching meekness and self-denial to them was not something of an insult. That idea had been at the back of his mind for some time, but only now was it beginning to take shape.

He expected the people to take Jesus home enshrined in their hearts. But he knew that when they went home the weight of their material problems descended on them and crushed the spirit that was in them. To a cosmic observer their problems might seem trivial, but to themselves they were big, acute, ominous: they demanded to be solved somehow immediately, without thought for the long view, for God's view. It was idle to condemn a naked man for the materialism that obsessed him with desire for a coat. The people had no peace and no time to follow up the search for God. They asked him to do that for them, hoping that God would see their difficulties, and understand.

Knowing the way it was with them, he accepted this obligation gladly and without reserve. But while he had

felt sure of his ground as long as he did not raise his eyes over the fence of that Presbyterian backyard in Tennessee, as soon as he set out towards the horizon it seemed to recede farther away. He was like a man crossing a mountain range. Every time he climbed to the top of one mountain there came in sight ten more that must be climbed, and his sense of direction became more confused.

Though he was ashamed of his own ignorance now that he began to see the vastness of the riddle of God in man, he was not discouraged. He did not know what the answer was. But he was sure there was one.

To most of the people in the community he was a young fountainhead of learning, and yet he knew nothing. He hungered for greater knowledge and prayed for it. One day there was a letter for him with a New York postmark. It flashed into his mind that this might be God reaching out to help him. What he drew from the envelope was nothing but a publisher's advertisement, but it served to turn the direction of his whole life. A book called *The Modern Use of the Bible* by Harry Emerson Fosdick, pastor of a big New York church, attracted his attention and he sent a check for a copy.

The book came: it smelled fresh and new, unlike those he had been accustomed to handling. That evening in the little parlor of the manse he sat down to read it, with Joyce sitting across from him sewing something for the baby. As he read, he laughed from time to time as though incredulously, and then glanced up quickly, wondering what Joyce might think. After a while Joyce said:

"Is it as funny as all that?"

Something that she knew and loved well in Claude simmered over then. He slapped his knee and laughed the drawn-out groan of a laugh that came from him only when the joke was very near home.

He came with the book and sat beside her.

"Funny?" he said. "Read that and see if you can stop laughing at us."

They sat up half through the night, reading the book. Their spirits had not risen so high together since courting days at Bethel. The simple but startling thing that Fosdick did was to take the Bible and try to apply it to modern life, instead of making it an iron mold into which life must somehow be fitted.

It was a revelation to them, not of something new and strange, but of something they seemed to have known for a long time. They had known it with their instinct, but, because they were so isolated in their backwoods, they could not even have found the words in which to speak of it to each other. The vigorous river of their minds had been dammed by a dark silt. Their laughter now was the sound of the silt being blasted away, the river pouring forward.

Claude had been making a jackass of himself with his God of iron. The discovery of that gave him an exhilaration mixed with vexation for all the lost years. But there was no time now for looking upon his own ignorance and chastising himself for it. A channel had been opened up and, though he did not know whither it led, he was not afraid.

There had been shackles on God, and now they were removed. His instincts had not deceived him about Bethel. The God of the old men who wanted to interfere with his marriage was not his God. It was a crumbling mummy that he had studied in such painful detail, and that he had been preaching to men and women who were hungry and oppressed, naked and weary.

He felt that life was just beginning for him now, and yet already he had his health to worry about. He was tubercular. The doctor told him to go to a sanatorium

and stay three months. He went, and was put on a diet of raw vegetables.

On the eighth day in the sanatorium he was talking to the nurse, who did not know he was a preacher.

"Do you believe in prayer?" the nurse asked.

"Do you?" he said.

"Yes. You know, I was caring for a man recently who had tuberculosis of the throat. One day I felt my throat burning. I prayed for hours—and next day the burning had gone and I was cured."

"Hand me my clothes," said Claude.

"What do you want with them?"

"I'm going home. I can pray at home."

The great wave of the spirit that had caught Claude and Joyce in Auburntown was sweeping realistic students of religion all over the world into the movement to brush the cobwebs off God, to make the Churches a vital force again in the lives of men.

In the Northern centers of American culture it had brought into being seminaries and foundations with a new kind of theology to teach. In Nashville, Tennessee, the Vanderbilt School of Religion was instituting courses.

Claude asked his church boards for leave of absence to take the courses, and they looked with favor upon such a sign of zeal. They did not know what kind of a school it was, nor what kind of religion a person would learn under Dr. Alva W. Taylor.

In Nashville Claude found relief from the sense of isolation which had begun to oppress him. He found there other young preachers who, in their remote Southern parishes, had been experiencing the same mental disturbance, the same darkness of doubt, the same hunger for release through knowledge from the prison of bigotry and superstition. His fellow-students, Don West and

Howard Kester, were the first men with whom he had been able to share his deepest religious problems.

Alva Taylor quietly pulled aside the supernatural veils which the organized Churches had draped around Jesus, and revealed the simple Nazarene philosopher. He brought Jesus to life and fitted him into the picture of today. To detach Jesus from the fabric itself of organized society, he said—to make acceptance or rejection of him a mere decision for each individual to take—was only to crucify him yet again.

He placed the Jesus of history in perspective, and spoke of other great spiritual leaders: of Confucius, Lao-Tze, Buddha. He contrasted the modern world with the world in which Jesus lived and interpreted the gospels in the light of that contrast. That which men could profitably learn from Jesus, he said, was not a stiff dogma, not a panacea either individual or social, but a philosophy and a basis for a program of action.

"There is a social evangelism as well as a personal evangelism," he said. "And the more we have of the former the less will we require the latter, for when the community is made Christian fewer will take the evil way, and there will be a larger measure of righteousness in all men.

"Making the community Christian is not only to practise the gospel of preventive morality, but it is to build up the Kingdom of God, for that Kingdom is the winning of all those influences that surround us to the will of God. The Kingdom is within, but it must get without also, or it will not stay within. Like the leaven, it works its way until all is leavened."

The floodgates were opened wide, and Claude, seizing every spar of knowledge that he could reach, let himself be borne from stage to broader stage of understanding. He returned from Nashville to take up his parish work

again. In every spare moment he applied himself to books. Rabbi Hillel Silver's *Religion in a Changing World* showed him how much he could learn about God even from the sect that crucified their own brother, Jesus. Scorning now to shut his eyes to truth in the name of a fossilized God, he let Jeans, Eddington and Millikan introduce him to the physical facts of the universe. He had publicly cursed science as a deception of Satan, repeating the parrot-phrases of the fundamentalists because that was all he knew. Now, as he learned the wonders that science had uncovered, he was filled with praise and gratitude towards the Almighty.

During the next two years the hours he devoted to study brought increasing fulfillment and the hours of his work as a minister became increasingly painful and difficult. Each spring he went back to Nashville to continue the courses under Taylor. Kester and West were there, and a new student, a young Methodist preacher named Ward Rodgers. The four of them went forward together.

He was astonished, strengthened, and a little mortified by the way Joyce kept up with him. She was occupied with having another baby, and only had time to skim through the books which he studied so carefully. Yet somehow she seemed always to be a little ahead of him when they discussed their new God and their new world.

He did not know what to preach. He could not take his congregations with him along the road, he felt, because the scenery was all so new to him, and he could not pause at any point and decide just where he was or where he might finally arrive. He knew what he did not believe, but he did not yet know what he believed. He had torn up his physical world, eliminated his heaven, and was only groping after new ones to take their place.

It seemed to him that for the time being his only stand-

ard must be loyalty to the churches that were paying him, so he went into the pulpits and, all conviction lost, preached the old crude, devil-rousing, foursquare Bible messages. Troubled by the possible cowardice of his position, he made his revivalist thunderings more violent than ever, and risked the disfavor of the comfortable worshippers by directing the spotlight more sharply at the sins they favored. He preached on "Eternity, Where Will You Spend It?" and described in patient detail the blue flames licking between the sinners' legs and wrapping themselves around their necks.

Joyce was reticent about the line he was taking, but he could sense that she was not happy about it. His vitals were torn more violently than they had been when he was fighting God's call to the ministry. One day he said to Joyce:

"I'm going to Lebanon and take me a course in law. I can be a lawyer without being a hypocrite, but I can't be a preacher without being a hypocrite."

"Yes, you can," Joyce said.

"How?"

"Preach what you believe."

Almost overnight, he felt firm ground under his feet. His problems were far from solved, but he had mastered some keys to truth. It was 1929, his fifth year at Auburn-town.

Discarded forever were the primitive conceptions of religion which he had taken into his system with his mother's milk.

From a potent, intolerant, touchy old magician in the sky who created men frail and punished them with relentless fury for their frailty, his God had become a spirit of infinite love and understanding. From a Torquemada tempting to sin and then toasting sinners in the hot

place under the earth, his Satan had become pain and disease and oppression and war and bigotry—the forces that kept men from fulfillment of the divine in them, and that greater understanding and love had the power to banish.

The question of heaven and hell in some after-life had become unimportant because he saw the heaven that could be, the hell that was, on earth. He had to understand this hell and work for this heaven, and therefore his mind must be opened wide to all the wisdom men had painfully acquired about their physical world and the architecture of community life. He pursued the study of physics and biology and, tracing the development of human organization from tribal times through feudalism to industrial capitalism, became disgusted with the social immorality and bestiality of the machine age. He saw the futility of expecting individuals in such a society, which put a premium on unchristian conduct, by some magical process of the spirit to behave like Christians. Calvin had seen the danger-signals, back in the dawn of this age when the new merchant class was seizing power from feudal lords. The father of Presbyterianism, seeing that usury and exploitation were inevitable, had sought to make the individual responsible to God, through the Church, for not taking undue advantage of the very evils that made the new social machinery tick. But centuries of that sort of Christianity had failed to produce more than a handful of Christians. Why had the people whom Claude had converted to Jesus, who had so sincerely and earnestly accepted Jesus with their lips, always gone away and forgotten when it came to putting Jesus' code into action? They had forgotten because they lived in a society which demanded that they forget or go under.

Turning from the spectacle, Claude found consolation in Francis of Assisi and the simple life which alone

seemed to make possible the love of all things great and small as a standard of conduct. But he needed a living hero to follow in this revolt against the machine age, this pilgrimage back to the simple life. He found one in Gandhi, the Indian mahatma of the spinning-wheel. The power of Gandhi's campaign for the Indian people, which pitted love, in the form of passive resistance, against a system based on force, seemed to open up a path of action for the true Christian. If Christians all over the world could be persuaded to take this path, the present evil system would be smashed, and then would be the time for Christ's reign on earth to begin. Kester and West and Rodgers shared this idea. They all became members of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. They saw the world's salvation in absolute pacifism under a handicraft economy. If men really followed Jesus, they would not take part in any war. If they did not take part in war there would be no war.

It was a violent and profound revolution in Claude's mind, and it was still going on when he first felt able to bring a new message to his churchpeople. He and Joyce laughed together over the notes of his early sermons: the funeral orations in which he held out wings, harps and crowns of glory to the deceased devout; the promises of eternal fire to those who spotted their souls by voting at elections; the school commencement addresses exhorting boys and girls about to enter the bullring of capitalist society that they should, by serving God and not money, act as if the bull were not there. In spite of himself, Claude blushed over them, but Joyce said there was no need. He had given the best he had to the best he knew, and that was a good enough definition for any man's religion. But now his eagerness to share his new understanding with the people could no longer be held back.

He bought many copies of Fosdick's book and placed

them at the disposal of his church members. Then he went on preaching with a new breadth and emphasis the message of religious tolerance, in a series of sermons based on Peter Ainslie's *Scandals of Christianity*. He spoke of the two hundred and thirteen sects of the Christian religion with their two hundred and thirteen Gods. The Churches asked the people to be Christian, but themselves mocked the name of Christ by their bickerings. In such a small community as Auburntown, half the church members consigned the other half to hell for disagreeing about baptism. They had forgotten the spirit of Jesus and were fighting about the literal meaning of a great book, which they read without heed of the change and dynamics of history during two thousand years. They had lost touch with life and with the people, and had ended by making outward forms almost the whole of Christianity. Yet the one thing that emerged most clearly from Jesus was the unimportance of outward forms.

Claude's new religion gave him new eloquence, and there were few who were proof against his burning sincerity. The authority of his learning impressed the people, not least because of the homely and pointed wit illuminating it. The people were ignorant not from choice, but from necessity. They felt the preacher had something, and they wanted to follow along to see where this would lead.

Some of the elders seemed to smell brimstone along the trail. They prayed in alarm to the God of their fathers for the safety of this fine young preacher's soul. It was in vain. Claude, gathering strength from the response he felt he was getting from the people, began to put his theories into practice.

A house cleaning in his own Church was needed as a start. In the communities he served, three sub-sects of

Presbyterianism were fighting amongst each other for sole custody of the keys to heaven: his own U.S.A. Presbyterians, the Cumberlanders, who had revolted against predestination, and the U.S. Presbyterians, who had split away in Civil War days because they insisted slavery was Christian. The causes of the disputes had almost vanished, yet the three sub-sects clung to their isolation. In Watertown both Cumberland and U.S. groups were larger than the U.S.A. group, but the U.S.A.'s, being the richest, had a fine church, while the others had to worship in business buildings.

Claude drew up a proposal for a federation of all three under the roof of the U.S.A. church, to which each would have a right on certain days. He campaigned for it with printed postcards calling all Presbyterians and others to join in a discussion of the Universal Christ.

Eager also to reach the men and boys of the town who came to no church at all, he persuaded his friend Oscar Hankins, proprietor of the Watertown Pool Hall, to let him hold Tuesday night services there. Sixtyseven men came to the first service on a bitter winter's night. Claude opened up with a recitation of "The Shooting of Dan McGrew," and then preached on the subject "I Don't Believe." The next Tuesday he preached on "I Believe," with a recitation of "The Cremation of Sam McGee," and the attendance was bigger. The men thought the preaching was all right, and they liked the verses right well.

In the summer of that year he announced a week of revival meetings in the main church. There had never been a revival like it in Tennessee. The sins the preacher attacked were the sins of organized society, and he spoke of a new kind of love which alone could put them right: a bold, militant love that had to be mobilized on a mass basis, built on a new social foundation. The personal

frailties of the flesh he passed over as though they were of small account.

The revival had its climax in a Sunday sermon which lifted the load clear off the preacher's back, summarizing all he had learned since he first read Fosdick's book.

The church was filled. The daily messages had given the people a strange sense of upliftedness, and a curiosity as to how this revolutionary revival would end. The pillars of the church sat in the front rows, and behind their Sunday expressions Claude could see some critical misgivings mixed with half-grudging admiration for his success. As he began to speak, his eye was caught by the old black man at the back, who had come some miles to be present and had assumed his wistful smile, cocking his head slightly to one side.

"I have preached many things from this pulpit," he said. "I have not deceived you, for I have always preached that which I believed to be true. But we are all subject to error, and I stand before you to admit quite frankly that in my ideas about God and about sin I have often been wrong.

"I am saying to you now that I believe practically nothing of what I believed five years ago, when I came here. And five years from now I hope I shall believe nothing of what I believe now, but will have a larger view.

"Why do I say this? Because I have learned something very simple which is very difficult to learn: that there is no such thing as finality of truth in this finite world. Our conception of truth is determined by the facts as we know them today. When we discover another fact we have to readjust our entire system in the light of that fact.

"When people thought the earth was flat, it affected their religion just as it affected navigation and business.

We must remember that we know only in part. We see through a glass darkly. Therefore we must grant everyone the privilege of differing. What I think is wrong and what you think is wrong may not be the same.

"Edison says that no one knows one seven-billionth of one per cent about anything. Job said, 'We are but of yesterday and know nothing.' Socrates said, 'One thing I know, that I know nothing.' Emerson said, 'Knowledge is knowing that we cannot know.' Those were some of the wisest men who have lived. Hence I am not cocksure about what I believe, and you should not be.

"Our young folks today are having trouble with the Bible, even if they are not indifferent or frankly sceptical about it. Many people pretend to believe the Bible from cover to cover, but ninety per cent of them know scarcely anything about the Bible.

"Something is wrong, but it is not the young people and it is not the Bible. It is our theory of the Bible.

"We haven't given them the Bible. We have given them, not a book in which God progressively reveals his will to man as man progressively becomes more capable of receiving it, but a book which is equally inspired from Genesis to Revelation. We have learned nothing since the sixteenth century, when people said, 'It contains all knowledge human and divine, it is the source of all sciences and arts, it is the source and essence of all histories and professions, trades and works.' But the facts as we know them contradict the theory of the Bible's infallibility.

"I am perfectly familiar with the arguments used to prove the infallibility of the Bible. I have read the books on the subject. I have been preaching infallibility for five years. But I say now that the thoughts of Jesus and the Bible characters were not our thoughts, their ways not our ways, their science not our science. We must try

to see the truth which they are trying to express. Trying to put our science, our thoughts of today into the thought-forms of the Bible is like trying to put an oak into an acorn.

"I do not believe in the infallibility of the Bible, nor the science of the Bible. Yet I have a greater Bible than when I thought I had to believe some of the things it taught, such as that the earth is flat and the sun moves. I have a greater God than when I thought of him as physical, as jealous and spiteful. I have a God more worthy of worship than when I thought of him as murdering the firstborn and leading and directing war.

"To place these crude conceptions on the same level of inspiration as the higher teachings of the New Testament is to make the Bible an impossible book and destroy the faith of thinking people. If we expect the young to believe today, we must enable them to see these primitive conceptions as primitive conceptions and to trace them in their successive stages to fulfillment in the higher teachings of the New Testament. You cannot reconcile the ninth chapter of Esther, where 'they slew those who hated them and made feast to rejoice over victory,' with the Sermon on the Mount.

"We teach the young to use their reason, and yet they see that this book we give them as infallible from cover to cover actually proves over two hundred contrary and contradictory sets of doctrines. Can you blame the young for throwing up their hands and saying: 'This is a book of riddles. We despair of understanding it'?

"We give them the Bible as God's ultimatum in science. Just a few years ago the brains of Tennessee passed the Anti-Evolution Bill which forbids the teaching of Evolution in tax-supported schools because it contradicts the science of the Bible. The Bill was passed because a lot of hotheaded religionists said pass it. Fifty

per cent of them would not have known whether Galileo lived before Moses or after. Yet no preacher of Bible infallibility would dare preach today that the earth is flat. They know that the facts prove it a lie.

"They should be taught that the Bible was written before Galileo, Newton, Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, Faraday, Kepler and Pasteur; before biology, zoology, chemistry, physics, geology, astronomy or our other modern sciences were thought of. Hence it was written in the thoughtforms and scientific conceptions of the day in which it was written.

"It is not a scientific book. It is not given to us to tell us how God made the earth, but to tell us how the Kingdom of God can be brought to the earth."

The simple, modestly phrased message moved the people strangely.

The elders did not speak of it afterwards to Claude, though it disturbed some of them. It struck at the foundation of their morality. They were conscious in their hearts of their own black ignorance, but the God of their fathers made ignorance a virtue. They did not want any Galileo, nor any God who did business with such people.

But they were trained to the success standard, and their preacher's heresies were not yet serious enough to overbalance consideration of the well-filled collection plates, the thunder he had stolen for them from the Baptists and the Campbellites.

IV

What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warm and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself.—JAMES

When the bourgeoisie lent a deaf ear to the cry for land, the fate of democracy in the South was already sealed.—JAMES S. ALLEN

OVER the dark South that winter fell a shadow.

Folks with education, who bought newspapers and could read them, learned of the catastrophe that had fallen upon the great money markets of the North like the stars falling. Billions of dollars, the paper foundation of that great prosperity which the people of the South had heard about but never seen, had been sunk out of sight. They had been there, and now they just were not there any more.

For a time nothing seemed to have changed much, down in the South, the 552-million-acre crescent of thirteen States from Virginia to Texas. Though it was the richest land in all America, the great mass of its people had never known anything but poverty. They still toiled and hungered and cursed and laughed and sinned as they had always done. The two hundred and thirteen Christianities still offered their two hundred and thirteen ways to obtain bliss after it was all over.

But where two or three landlords and business men

were gathered together, there was gloom. Their God, in whom they trusted, had hurled a rock into the pool of society, and the resulting tidal wave which they saw approaching threatened terrible havoc.

Soon the people learned that because of the catastrophe in Wall Street they must face worse conditions than they already had; that many must lose their tiny savings, and some must now toil still harder for less pay, while others must be idle and starve entirely. Turning in bewilderment to the only guides they had, the professional God-men, they were told that it was the Lord's will, which should not be questioned but accepted. It had all been foretold in Revelation. It was God's judgment upon his puppets for their materialism, for their failure to suppress and sublimate the hungers with which he had equipped them.

Times were going to be harder, and that was apparently the end of it. Since the people were hardly conscious of the man-made social machine in which they were cogs, they could not know how the machine worked and why it had to break down.

Claude would not have known it two years before, but now he had the dismal satisfaction of seeing an inevitable fulfillment. The intensified suffering to which the disinherited millions were condemned made him more intent upon clearing his vision of every mist, so that he might be fit to challenge the machine plainly and positively.

Though they were still attracted to passive resistance, he and his friends at Vanderbilt had come to despair of the system of production for profit which thus resulted in famine amid plenty. It was not only unchristian; it was unworkable. They knew that the catastrophe was of man and not of God. They positively rejected the idea that God wanted people to suffer unnecessary want, that he condemned protest and demands for food, shelter and

clothing as materialistic. Alva Taylor had put the real truth of it in simple words which were burned into Claude's brain:

"The words God, gospel, good, goods are all bound up together. Without goods there is not much chance for the average man to enjoy the good. The golden rule of Jesus was founded realistically upon a recognition of the primacy of self in human experience. To every rational human being, self is the pivot upon which all experience turns. All begins with self. It is only when all ends with self that the Christian teaching is subverted."

Now that he saw man's material and spiritual struggle as one struggle, mysteries which had always baffled him suddenly began to make sense. The American background, the background of his South, made an intelligible picture. Why was this just man denied the barest comforts and security while that man of no scruple or mercy had wealth and power lavished on him? He had seen such injustice everywhere, and had had to console himself as best he could with blind faith that an apparently irrational God knew best. But now he could see the social forces at work behind it all. It was only because men could not or would not use the brains God gave them that they shifted the blame for social injustice on to God's shoulders.

He could see what had held the South back so that the great mass of its people had never benefited from the conquests of technology which had revolutionized standards of life in the rest of America. It went back seven decades to the Civil War, when the agricultural South had fought to keep its feudal slave system against the industrial revolution that in the North was already far advanced. The victory of the North had been historically inevitable, and slavery had been abolished.

But then, during the reconstruction years after the

war, had come the testing time. If the South was to take its place with the North in the industrial system based on private enterprise, the farming people had to become consumers of what Northern industries produced. To become consumers the farming people had to have land to farm, and they had to have democracy to remove the last feudal chains binding the feet of capitalist progress.

Millions of freed slaves were hungering for land and democracy. All they knew was raising tobacco and cotton. All they asked was a little farm of their own, forty acres and a mule, and a voice in their own government. They had faith that this was the least that could come out of the war for them, after their long tribulation.

But it never happened. Farsighted leaders in the North saw what was needed; they amended the Constitution to guarantee Negroes equal democratic rights, and they tried for a time to get the land divided up. But for generations the idea of Negro animalness had been part of the South, and the landowner-planters had the card of race prejudice to play to retain their privileges. Instead of being ashamed of their responsibility for the backward condition of the Negroes, which the Negroes themselves yearned to improve, the defeated planters had used this backwardness to justify keeping the Negroes in subjection by force and terror. The Negroes' right to vote, hold office and sit on juries soon became no more than a paper right. And help no longer came from the industrialists of the North; they were not interested in justice for the Negroes, but only in expanding their markets, and this they were able to do along the new frontiers to the westward. So the Negroes had been left to their fate. Over their hunger for land and democracy the forces of Southern law-and-order, represented by hooded whites riding by night to lynch and torture, had been allowed to triumph. At the end of their heroic struggle the slaves,

officially free, had remained an oppressed, segregated, scorned race. So it had been ever since. Millions of American citizens, because their skins were the wrong color, had never enjoyed the simple rights guaranteed to all Americans in the Constitution.

Claude looked back with the eyes of his new understanding over the story of the South, and the shame of its treatment of the Negroes gripped him. He wondered whether they were not really better off as slaves than as laborers and sharecroppers. Many slaves had been fairly well housed and fed because they cost money and had value only so long as they were in good shape. At first the planters, returning beaten from the battlefields with land but no money, had thought they were ruined. They could not cultivate the land nor plant and harvest a crop. But soon they had found they were well rid of that legal slavery for which they had fought for five years. Field-hands were plentiful now; they cost nothing and were forced to work on any terms they could get, for they had no land, no credit, no mule, no place to go. When they were not needed the planters had no investment in them and no responsibility. It was an ideal arrangement for the raising of cotton, which required work of a very arduous but only seasonal nature.

Under the sharecropping system the slave had freedom to starve, and the planter had freedom to cheat him to his heart's content, to evict him at will or whim, to work him under the eye and lash of overseers from can to can't, and to force his children to work in the fields instead of going to school. Some of the old paternal planters, indolent and arrogant as the slave system had made them, had a certain sentiment about their niggers and took less than full advantage of this situation. But soon they had passed on to their lilywhite heaven, to fan themselves and sip juleps through eternity. And year by year

the old plantations had passed more into the hands of great monopolies, of speculators who lived far away. A monopoly of that kind did not have any heart. Its individual shareholders might be the most pious of Christians, but the monopoly, being impersonal, had no heaven or hell to think about; it existed to make a profit, and that was the sole law of its being. The people who raised the cotton now worked under masters who did not own the land, but held their power in whole or in part from a far-away bank or corporation. The masters' privilege of living on the work of others depended on showing a profit.

That was their job, and it was not easy. Cotton had always been a poverty crop since its origin on the Nile, and the South's crop had to compete on the world market with coolie cotton from Asia. Profits depended quite simply on making the American citizens who raised cotton live like coolies. And so when in the North and West plumbing and cars and radios were being accepted in the American standard of living, when in the North and West the eight-hour day was accepted and illiteracy almost abolished, in the South millions still could not read nor write, worked twelve and fourteen hours a day and lived in medieval sties without even an outhouse privy.

It had gone on like that from decade to decade, and such Southern whites as found justification necessary had found it at first in the idea that it had always been the same, and Negroes did not know or deserve any better anyhow. But instead of improving, the cotton-toilers' condition had become worse. The pyramid of landlords and other parasites between grower and consumer of cotton had risen, leaving always less for the man at the bottom. Weather hazards and the boll weevil made cotton at best a gambler's crop, and world markets were flooded with cotton; the price trend was persistently downward

except during the four years when cotton played its part in the work of mass human slaughter. Banks increased their credit rates to cotton-planters, and the planters had to pass it on somehow to the toilers. Cheating the toilers out of their agreed share of the crop was no longer enough. Plantation commissaries were opened, where the people had to buy everything at prices far higher than elsewhere. Every inch of land was needed for the cash crop, and so cotton, which steadily drained the soil, was planted every year up to the very doors of the toilers' cabins, and they could not keep hogs, chickens and cows or grow vegetables.

The falseness of the old excuse that such poverty and hardship were good enough for the inferior Negro was exposed as more and more whites were reduced to sharecropping under the same conditions. Never at a loss to rationalize the injustice of their system, the owners and masters called these wretches "poor-whites." The poor-whites quickly became just what the Negroes had always been: a race apart that knew no better. They lived like pigs, therefore they were pigs. They preferred to live so. But in fact there was no alternative for any landless farmer in the South than to become a sharecropper. Once the animal standard of living and accompanying deprivation of civil rights were accepted for Negroes, landless whites had to accept them too, or starve. As the monopolies gobbled up the land, the poor-whites increased until now there were more of them sharecropping than there were Negroes.

Seen thus in the light of economic forces, the truth about race prejudice became clear to Claude. There was no reality in it. Science recognized no races. It was a weapon used, consciously or unconsciously, by the owners to drive down the living standards of the people. It was an infection which either had to be cauterized out of so-

ciety or it must inevitably spread. Let the animal standard be accepted for the Negro, and soon the poor-white farmer must accept it. Let it exist on the farms, and soon it must spread to the workers in Southern industries. That was inevitable, and it had happened. Already there were accepted a Southern and a Northern standard of wages and working hours covering every branch of production, and the degradation of one was a threat to the other. America was trying to go forward half slave and half free. The American standard of living was a fiction. The country was trying to expand by selling oil to China, plumbing and machinery to Europe, yet millions of Americans had never become consumers of the simplest products of the machine age, and hardly knew they existed.

The South's problem was now so manifold and complex that clearly there was no way out short of socialism; the conscious national planning of production for the people's needs instead of blind production for the profit of a privileged class. The people could make the change. But first they had to make a reality of their Constitutional right to vote—a right denied not only to Negroes, but to millions of whites by the imposition of a poll-tax they could not afford to pay. And this they could not achieve until they succeeded in conquering generations of race prejudice, until they were unified. The white masses could not end their wretchedness without the black, nor the black without the white.

Yet the poor-whites held aloof from the Negroes because they saw them as the cause of their degradation. And the Negroes held aloof from the race that had enslaved, beaten down and lynched them.

It was an old problem, but made more pressing now by the catastrophe which was pulling cotton prices still farther down.

There were young people of both races who had thought it out independently and saw clear. Their desire to make progress towards better understanding took shape in an Inter-Racial Conference called by the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Buck Kester and Claude had fraternized a little with Negroes of Fisk University in Nashville. They had achieved a brotherly feeling towards the Negroes, but they knew how theoretical it still was. Determined to break down completely their heritage of race prejudice, the instincts planted so deep in them, they decided to go to the Conference with Mrs. Kester and Roth Hilgar, a Vanderbilt student. It was to be in a summer camp at Waveland, Mississippi.

Driving southward to the coast, Claude said:

"Buck, I'm intellectually convinced, but I'm not sure of my emotions. Sleeping with Negroes, eating with them. . . . I'm thinking of my Dad's face. I'm ready in my mind to act as if we all had the same-colored skins. I don't want, though, to have any experience there that I might rebel against."

The camp was a group of frame buildings by the edge of the Gulf of Mexico. Claude ate at table with Negroes that evening for the first time in his life. Old instincts crowded to the surface, and he had to force himself to sit there, at the long table with black people beside and across from him. He realized how concerned he was about who dipped into a dish before he did. He tried to talk unstrainedly to his neighbors, but it was difficult. He kept reminding himself he must speak the word "Negro" plainly so that he would not even appear to use the compromise word "Nigrer." He must not refer to "Uncles," "Aunts," and "Mammies." These were things the colored people were most sensitive about.

At the end of dinner there was a performance of

college songs and yells by some of the young Negroes. It was a new thing in Claude's experience. There was in it an exciting warmth and vigor. The sounds seemed to come not from their mouths but from somewhere deep and far: from the heart of Africa and the heart of a lusty people in bondage. He thought of the colored congregation's thanksgiving to God in that wretched schoolhouse near Auburntown, and of Moses crying out: "Let my people go!" The singing was full of infinite melancholy and abundant life.

Carried away by it, he forgot that there were people who said Negroes had no souls. Only a deaf man could fail to hear their souls being poured out in this music. The Negroes honored him by thus letting him into their fellowship.

After a while an octoroon girl began to play the piano. Her long hair streamed down her back and she was beautiful. With curious and brilliant art she interpreted by her playing various people present there, whom the others knew.

"It is marvelous," Claude said to himself, not knowing the people interpreted. He had a sensation entirely new: humility before these Negro people. He saw them coming abreast of the whites, and even excelling them.

The camp was crowded, and there were only two beds for every three. A Negro, an athletic coach from a school at Louisville, Kentucky, was assigned to share a two-bedded room with Claude and Hilgar.

Hilgar was in bed first, and Claude hesitated as to which bed he should choose. He no longer minded the idea of sleeping with a Negro, but it occurred to him that he might be thought presumptuous if, by occupying the other bed, he showed he expected the Negro to sleep with a white. He got in the bed with Hilgar.

He woke early in the morning, and beneath the win-

dow the bay was like a quilt of diamonds rippled under the rising sun. He looked over at the other bed and saw the Negro sleeping there. The night had been warm and the Negro was in his underwear without any covering on him. The brown body was supple and perfectly proportioned. The Negro was the most beautiful figure of a man Claude had ever seen.

The picture of the young Negro lying there became a symbol for Claude of the inner conversion he had undergone.

He had forced himself into equal and intimate contact with Negroes, and suddenly they were people to him: a marvelous people. The fabulous wall of prejudice had fallen flat at a touch of his hand, and he saw it was of paper and had no foundations. It had been as easy to push the wall over as it had been hard to make himself touch it.

Driving home, he wanted to grab hold of passing white people and tell them how easy it was. He wanted to go up to the Negroes in the streets, shake their hands and embrace them before all the whites. The fancy quickly passed and, remembering how he himself felt about it before the unchristianity of it first troubled him, he decided he did not want to be lynched just yet. The wall separating whites and blacks in the South might be of paper, but it was still a mighty wall so long as the whites thought it was and wanted it to be.

In a mood of meditation and ecstasy he studied the Negroes he saw in the towns and on the country roads. There were shabby, dirty, lowdown-looking Negroes. But it was all a matter of whether a man looked at them as individuals or as a group fixed in a certain relation to society. Southern whites looked at them as individuals, judging the race by the worst they saw, because they either could not or would not see beyond the individual.

They saw the lowdown, backward black man whom they had themselves produced, and then they went about saying wisely: "I know the nigger." But the fact was that no one knew less about the Negro than the average Southern white man, from whom any Negro by an instantaneous reflex hid his real face. Claude recalled what someone at Waveland had said about the difference between the Northern and Southern attitudes towards Negroes. The Northerner said: "The Lord intended you to be free, damn you." The Southerner said: "The Lord intended you to be a slave, bless you." Of the two, the Northern attitude was a little less disgusting.

The first service Claude conducted after he came home was at the church near Lebanon. His experience at Waveland was still uppermost in his mind and, since his ideas about Negroes had taken definite shape, he could not do otherwise than tell them to the congregation.

He preached on the text, "Go and preach the gospel to every nation." He said that the Church, which called itself Christian, had never preached the gospel to the Negro people. It had thrown them the outward form of Christian worship like a bone to a dog, using the doctrine of humility to keep them a subject race. It had been a leader of the unchristian segregation of the Negroes. It had preached brotherhood, but had never even tried to practise brotherhood.

He told the people very simply what he had learned about Negroes at Waveland. Negroes were not inherently vicious. They did not have to be held in subjection to prevent them attacking white women and trying to rule the whites. They did not want to rule anybody except themselves and they were not inherently any different from people of any other color. There were bad Negroes, but whatever they were it was the whites who made them so. He had seen and he could testify that

Negroes could be just as good as whites, given an equal chance.

The service broke up in a hush and the people spoke a few polite words to the preacher and went home. One of the elders had asked Claude for dinner. He was a man who prided himself on his Southern courtesy, and at dinner he showed Claude the same deference he had always shown.

They discussed local matters and laughed a little, and did not speak of the sermon for some time. There was a pause after the meal was finished, and Claude asked: "What did you think of the sermon today?"

The elder stroked his chin.

"By golly, preacher," he said, "you got the gift, all right. You got me just about convinced on some o' them idees o' yours. But by golly, d'you mean to tell me that a damn burrhead is as good as I am?"

"Not at good as you are, neighbor. But as good as I am."

"But the Bible, preacher, the Bible. It don't make no differ, you can't take away or add to what's in the Book. God made the niggers to be hewers o' wood and drawers o' water. They're jist animals. Don't tell me anything that stinks like that can be a human being."

Claude was not surprised to hear a few days later that the elder was going about telling everyone: "The preacher has gone crazy. He's a nigger-lover. Wants to have niggers eat at table with him and marry his daughters."

"I think," said Joyce in her quiet way, "we'd better be getting ready to sing 'He Doesn't Live Here Any More.'"

Claude saw that a long, hard battle lay ahead of him. He faced it without fear and without regrets. The old Cherokee blood was warming up.

"Hell, maybe I am crazy," Claude said. Joyce disagreed. He was not sure that he thought so himself.

He felt, indeed, an increasing sense of relief as his position in the parish became more shaky. His God, no longer fixed and circumscribed, had come alive. He was the force for good in the world and he was to be found everywhere. There was more of God in a loaf of bread, in the marriage-bed of a Negro sharecropper, than in most churches.

God was love. Men could not live by bread alone, but they could not live at all without it, and if they did not live, how could they love? He was on the job of building the Kingdom of God. His first task, then, was Jesus' task: To feed the hungry and clothe the naked.

The whole of life for Claude and Joyce, both day and night, was explained and enriched by their discovery of God. They had a new pleasure in each other, in the simple things they did together as well as in the widening of their mental horizon. They understood what the Kingdom of God on earth was, and were armed for the fight to win it. Their strained relations with the elders became as nothing when they learned that the General Assembly of the U.S.A. Presbyterian Church had reported:

"The Church has carried Christ into many fields, but the one where our greatest victories for humanity may now be achieved is in the field of social and economic relationships."

That was a revolutionary saying to come out of the Assembly. It meant that not Claude and Joyce but the elders were the ones who were out of step with the Church program. It made Claude proud of his Church. The world was going to be changed, and the Church, faithful to its mandate from God, was going to lead the way.

He did not have long to wait for God to show him an

opening. L. E. Blakemore, a Presbyterian minister whom Claude met at Vanderbilt, spoke to him of the plight of the miners and farmers in western Arkansas. He spoke of a little mining town called Paris, where the Presbyterian church had failed to touch the realities and was almost dead.

"Those people are lost in a fog," Blakemore said. "They need leadership. They need a man of your type."

As soon as he could, Claude went over to look at the place. He found a church with only twenty members and no pastor in a community of four thousand souls. Paris was a typical small town of the Arkansas hill country, beautifully situated in the foothills: a dozen streets wandering off to nowhere from the courthouse square, which was the community center. Most of the people were miners, who lived in little frame houses of two or three rooms straggling out in rows to the edge of the town. Apart from the town, in the bottom towards the Arkansas River, were the cabins of several hundred Negroes. Nine-tenths of the people were starvation poor, and malaria, tuberculosis and pellagra were rife. The mine was only working fitfully, paying miserable wages to the miners, who had no union. Apart from a handful of mine-owners and landlords, nobody had any money to spend, and the merchants and business men could hardly survive. There was a feeling of terrible hopelessness all through the town. Nothing was being done to improve conditions and nobody had any idea what to do.

The Presbyterian church was a drab and unkempt frame building that had once been a schoolhouse. It stood back from the main highway through town, with the manse, a good-sized, dilapidated house with a lawn, standing between. It was a T-shaped building with one wing empty and cobwebs on all but the front benches of the long, narrow worshipping-plant.

Claude preached a trial sermon to the congregation of twenty: a vigorous generalized talk on the subject "God Is." After the service he talked with the officials of the church: a dry-goods merchant, a real-estate man, the publisher of one of Paris' two weekly papers, a retired Colonel, and a land-owning lady. They were pleased at the prospect of reviving their decayed church with so eloquent a preacher. Claude said he would come only on condition he was given a free hand to try to put into action the new principles of the Presbyterian General Assembly. He knew the kind of social message he would want to bring to Paris, and the elders might not agree with all he said. The officials liked him and were impressed by his sincerity, and said they were sure they could be as broad-minded as anyone: they would all be working for the Lord together and there could be no real disagreement.

The job paid \$1,800 a year, half to come from the local members and half from the Presbyterian Board of Missions. It was not much for a family of four, but Claude saw Paris as a fruitful field because it was a community of poor, humble toilers and there were many young people. He believed he could build a program that would serve them.

It was increasingly clear that he could not carry on at Auburntown. To know what he did about the social catastrophe was to crave a post of action in the front lines. He had a message to give, and most of the church officials in Auburntown, Watertown and Lebanon did not want it. It was not for such a message that they paid out the \$2,500 a year which was now his salary. The only religion that was worth that to them was one justifying the social structure as God-ordained, keeping morality on an individual basis, offering the poor a chance of heaven in exchange for meek acceptance of their lot.

The officials made no open issue of the cleavage that had come between them and their preacher. They still acted in a friendly way and they made it clear that, admiring his ability as they did, the road would not be closed to him. But a talk with Dr. M. L. Gillespie, head of the Presbyterian Board of Missions in Little Rock, ended all doubt. He told Gillespie frankly what he had in mind to do in Paris, and Gillespie said he would back him to the hilt in such a program. Soon after this Claude saw that the cleavage between him and his church elders was one that stretched right through the Presbyterian Church from top to bottom. Various officials of the Synod spoke to him about his future. They told him that he needed to go to a real old-time religious school to get his ideas straightened out. Books were leading him astray. He was a good preacher, but young and in need of discipline.

One of them remarked: "Claude, you have the unfortunate virtue of making people understand what you say."

Another said: "Don't you realize what you are throwing away? If you drop all this nonsense, our best pulpits in all the land are open to you. In a few years you could be earning \$10,000 a year."

It was like asking the leopard to change his spots, and there was no obstinacy in Claude's firmness. He could no more preach the old kind of messages now than preach in Chinese. He had to keep going ahead in spite of hell and all the Church dignitaries resident therein. Some of the officials who thus cajoled and chided him had been very good to him. But they could not understand because they were theologians, and Claude had been studying religion. They were liberal-minded, but, though Claude respected their liberalism, it was poppycock to him.

The discovery that the General Assembly's report

represented only one faction of the Church leadership was a disappointment. But Gillespie was on his side, and his resolution was stronger than ever because now again he had been touched on his most sensitive place. He wanted to serve the people, and here they were trying to stop him by imposing top-down control, a dictatorship of old men over the plain word of God.

After several Church officials had spoken in the same strain, Joyce noted that Claude wanted to kill someone. She understood that the decision was made. She went to taking things down off shelves and packing them for the move to Paris.

They piled household goods in a truck and the two little girls into the back of the car and pulled out of Auburntown in good spirits. They drove down through Memphis, crossed the big bridge over the Mississippi River, and headed out across Arkansas on highway seventy.

Claude sang "I'm A Good Old Rebel" in a loud voice as he drove, adapting the words to various hymn tunes. He felt good. The rows of cotton in the fields, just coming to maturity, were twin fans spreading toward the car on either side, endlessly moving and endlessly the same. He was back in the old brierpatch where he was born and bred. Negro and poor-white sharecroppers, whose cabins, dotting the landscape, teetered in drunken decay, toiled with their children and womenfolk at the season's last chopping. The rich, monotone greenness was only broken here and there by signs nailed to trees: CLABBER GIRL BAKING POWDER, 666 FOR MALARIA, PAZO FOR PILES, JESUS IS COMING, PREPARE TO MEET GOD. The atmosphere of squalor and dark isolation from the pulse of human progress and culture was more intense even than in Tennessee. Except for the signs on the trees, there was nothing to distinguish the landscape from the way it

would have looked a hundred years back, at the height of the slave economy. There was no evidence that the machine age had ever come. Claude waved his hand and shouted a greeting to the ragged, weary sharecroppers, both white and black, who were near the roadside. They went on with their work like automata, only one or two of them glancing up in faint surprise and staring after the car for a few seconds.

Farther west, they came into the hill country that was more thickly forested and less intensely cultivated. They crossed the Arkansas River on the State highway, and the first coal mines, each with its company town or village for the miners, told Joyce they were nearing Paris. It was a beautiful landscape which the occasional heaps of slag were hardly able to mar.

"If I was full of God when we came to Auburntown," Claude said, slapping Joyce on the knee, "I guess I've got the devil in me now. Shore have."

Joyce smiled. She knew what he meant, and she just wanted to see him in action in the new field.

After they had settled themselves in the manse, Claude strolled down to the courthouse square. It was Saturday, and most of the population, young and old, black and white, were out on the square. Young girls in cheap store dresses wandered up and down arm in arm, giggling from time to time. Hungry-looking men in patched, frayed overalls leaned against every wall, squatted on every doorstep. Most of the white men showed the peculiar features of coalminers: the stiff hips, powerful shoulders, loping walk, sallow skin with black marks around the eyes where coal dust had got under. The crowd was thickest outside the pool hall, and a number of men could be seen inside it, playing snooker or cards. A stately old farmer with a white beard drove a two-horse wagon through the square, very slow. An ancient moved

through the crowd with the quavering chant: "I'm gonna ask you to buy one of these pencils."

Claude got into conversation with some of the groups on the square. They looked suspiciously at him, and when he said he was the new Presbyterian pastor they did not seem to be much interested.

The following day the same twenty people who had come to hear his trial sermon, including the three elders of the church, turned up and sat before him wearing their respectable clothes and respectable expressions.

For some reason, as he looked at their uninspiring faces, he thought of the letter he had received from his kid brother, Jack.

Jack had written: "I hear you don't believe in hell. If you don't take those people some kind of a hell it'll be farther than Tennessee to Arkansas that you'll move next time."

V

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he anointed me to preach good news to the poor:
He hath sent me to announce release to the prisoners of war,
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To send away free those whom tyranny has crushed.—LUKE*

It has so happened in all ages of the world that some have labored and others have without labor enjoyed a very large proportion of the fruit. This is wrong and should not continue.
—ABRAHAM LINCOLN

THE churches of Paris, like those of Auburntown, Watertown and Lebanon, passionately differed on whether a Christian should be sprinkled into heaven or pushed forwards, backwards or sideways.

But on one point all agreed. This was the urgent necessity of closing the pool hall.

The Almighty planned to torture through all eternity any Parisian who took a piece of wood and with it caused a ball to strike other balls. It was the conscientious churchman's duty to do what he could about this.

Leading pieticians throughout the State of Arkansas, where morality was already protected by laws against such infamies as Sunday kite-flying, had taken up the problem. Their campaign had resulted in a law forbidding the game of pool. But the ways of Satan were as subtle in Arkansas as elsewhere. He had dodged the law by reducing the balls in size, adding one or two more, numbering them differently, and calling the game snooker. In Paris and other communities the pool hall remained the young men's meeting-place. The sin of

striking balls with pieces of wood grew in popularity, and the young folk continued to stay away from God's houses in great throngs.

Such was the situation Claude found, and if he wanted to revive the corpse of the Paris Presbyterian church by attracting the workers and the youth, he had the pool hall to beat.

There was no other competition. Paris had no park, no library, no place at all for people to go and foregather in comfortable relaxation. The churches offered posthumous passes to heaven, but even if the destination had been attractive to the young, the price in fleshly tedium was high.

With the people's immediate needs the churches did not concern themselves. For boys and girls reaching maturity there was no work. The miners, compulsorily idle through most of the year, tried to raise families on less than enough for their own bare needs, while the wealth they produced when they were allowed to work was shipped away on the railroad. To start work in the mine a man had to flicker—to get a loan ahead of payday—at a high rate of interest, to buy clothes, dinnerpail, carbide, lamp; so that nearly all remained in perpetual debt. On the plantations near by, Negroes and whites with their children rotted from exhaustion and want. But these were materialistic problems, and no concern of God's Paris agents, who had their hands full saving souls.

The churches of Paris were in the line of duty, for that was the kind of God they had, and all they were doing was serving him. He was the same God Claude had had until he became too uncomfortable a bedfellow; the God who, having made men in his own image, condemned them to weariness and frustration, disease and hunger, dirt and exposure and oppression, and then

mocked them with the bait of paradise and blackmailed them with the threat of hades. The blackmail had little force in Paris because the people already had their hell. There were miners and young people hanging around the courthouse square and the pool hall, who cursed God.

For this Claude did not blame them. But he had a different God for the people, symbolized in the way he dealt with the pool-hall problem. He went out and bought a pool table and set it up in the unused wing of the Presbyterian church. For Claude and his God the problem was just that size.

The symbol set something in motion, and very soon Claude had a time keeping up with the program the people built for themselves around the pool-table God. The empty wing of the church became a recreation-room with boxing gloves, punching bags, exercisers, Indian clubs, playing cards, checkers, books and magazines. The empty lot adjacent to the church was turned by young volunteers into a playground for tennis, basketball, baseball and volleyball. Claude found sixty dollars in an old building fund and persuaded the church treasurer that it should be used for buying equipment.

The young people came flocking. They organized two clubs for boys and two for girls, and formed discussion groups to take up subjects from war to sex equality and capital punishment. On Sunday afternoons that summer they drove in a cavalcade to nearby towns for inter-community devotions and games.

As for the miners, they had never heard of a church with a poolroom in it. It sounded kind of crazy. But any place where they could gather for snooker and cards and chinwacking in a pleasant atmosphere was all right with them. They warmed to Claude. Maybe he was a nut, they said, but he talked their kind of language. He did

not come the pious skipilot on them, and it wasn't one of those Salvation Army bargains where a man had to endure an hour's bibblebabble about his soul to get the doughnut. It was "Hi, neighbor" and "Hi, preacher" when they saw him, and there was a half-smile in the "Hi, preacher," indicating he did not fool them for a second; he was just an ordinary fellow.

Things were happening so fast around the old Presbyterian plant that it was like a whirlwind for Paris. The old church members and the elders and deacons blinked their eyes. They examined the God Claude had whisked in there and they were not sure if they knew him. They had given the preacher a free hand and they knew he had the backing of Dr. Gillespie, the district head of the Board of Missions which paid half his salary. They had to sit quiet and see what would come of it all.

Certainly there were things about the new God that impressed them. He was bringing new crowds to the services and Sunday School classes, even if many came in through a poolroom. Pennies, nickels and dimes were clinking into the collection plate. And here were the young folk coming from other churches and from no churches to do all kinds of work on the plant for nothing. The Presbyterian veterans of Paris had always deplored the frivolous spirit of youngsters who thought only in terms of money.

The services Claude conducted in the church were friendly affairs. He brought his God in and set him down in the midst of the people there in Paris, Arkansas: a simple spirit of good, of justice, of laughter, of plenty, of love. The people went for this God, and felt as if he was an old friend who had been away a long time on a balloon trip. The Sunday services were mostly devotional in the mornings. In the evenings they were given to the social Christian message setting forth how men had toiled

and suffered to establish the Kingdom on earth; how, after centuries of God working through man, the Kingdom was now at last ready at hand, and how the forces of finance-Mammon alone remained blocking the gate.

Claude preached from the Bible, but the old church members hardly recognized the book. He had gone all through it, sifting and sorting and re-evaluating in the light of present realities. He sat up each night till the small hours studying sociology and biology and economics. He kept his Bible on the arm of the chair as he studied, and worked out ways of presenting social and scientific truths through the familiar Bible stories and lessons. The task brought out for him depths of wisdom in the book which he had not suspected.

Every Sunday the congregations grew. The people who came were poor people, of many denominations and of none. The message was of and for the poor and was real to them, making them glow with faith and hope. It shone a beam of light into the vast impersonal darkness of their present suffering, and the name of the beam of light was God. In the courthouse square after the services people would gather in knots, discussing the preacher: barber, druggist, blacksmith, sharecropper, butcher, youths shot out of school into a blank world, young daughters of miners, stooped old retired farmers, housewives with toil-hardened faces.

"Preacher Williams is too forward-looking for a small town," the druggist would say. "The young folks sure like him," said the barber. "He's a challenge to us, that's truth of the business," said a youth. "He can preach," said a lawyer. "He's preaching what folks'll be practising twenty years from now," said the blacksmith. And Claude would walk by on his way to the pool hall to talk to some of the miners, and everyone would smile as he went by

and call out: "Hi, preacher! You certainly tell 'em! Keep it up, preacher!"

The manse became a kind of madhouse, with a floating population of young people who came to consult and discuss and chat. The resident population was rarely confined to Claude and Joyce and the two children, because it became known that there was lodging there for anyone with no place to shelter. A boy who had done a stretch in the industrial school for some delinquency was released under the preacher's care and stayed fifteen months. Joyce worked with Claude to fix up the little study of the manse. They framed and hung pictures of Jesus and Eugene Debs. They cut from a magazine a series of woodcuts of the progress of man, the first showing him with nothing but his two hands, the last showing him with his great brain-children, the machines, wondering how to make them his slave instead of his master. They stuck the woodcuts around the walls as a mural, and made shelves for all the scientific books and books about the new God which they kept accumulating.

The study became known as a place anyone could go at any time to talk with the preacher. Young people and humble people took to going there for advice and information on the most intimate problems, because the preacher did not hand it down like an oracle, but attacked the problems with them, giving them confidence in their own best judgment and instinct. He did not lecture them, but explained things simply, going down to the roots, so that they knew which direction to take and why. They found they could trust him, and there was one thing sure: nobody could talk to him on any subject without having some laughs, because his wit and good spirits were unfailing. He knew plenty, but he acted just like you or me, people said; the poorest illiterate laborer went out of the manse feeling like a

person. The study was soon accepted as a general information bureau. There would be a group talking down on the square and a point would come up to which nobody knew the answer. Someone generally said:

"Well, let's go to the preacher's and find out."

The people of Paris were hungry in mind and body. Claude had come there to help them find God, to find God with them, and God was food. They needed both mental and physical food so badly that it was impossible to put one need ahead of the other. The emptiness of their bellies made them unhealthily preoccupied with material needs, and so stunted their souls. Their minds were starved for knowledge which would explain why their bellies were empty and how they could be filled. The whole program of feeding the people must go forward in line.

Not satisfied with the narrow field of his own church, Claude went to bat in the two local papers for the God he represented. He wrote plainly and forcefully, anatomizing the system of famine-in-plenty with a ripe wit, demanding the good life for all the people. The editors, one of whom was a Presbyterian elder, printed the pieces because they were lively reading, and free material to fill the spaces between advertisements was always hard to come by. They thought Claude had a screw or two loose, but they had to respect his learning. Books unheard of in fundamentalist Arkansas were seen in the preacher's study: scientific books, books by Tolstoy, Marx, Norman Thomas, Veblen, Sinclair, Edward Carpenter, Wells, Steffens, Debs, Renan. To respectable partisans of the old God who occasionally happened in and saw them, the authors' names were strange. They did not think a man who read so many books could be a healthy influence on the young people. But of those who expressed this doubt to his face, none tried twice to quote

the Bible against him. He could always cap it with another text that left them tied in a knot. When he went to justifying himself with God's word on any phase of his program he left no text unturned, and it was no use for them to talk any more, because, though inner conviction assured them they were right, a good Christian could not answer back to God.

They were on safer ground when a moral issue came up about which God was not on record with any statement for or against. They were hard to shake on the question of the sinfulness of drinking, smoking, dancing, and playing pool. They knew God disfavored these things, and if he had not said so it was an oversight.

The previous year, boys and girls of the High School had suggested having a public dance, and the school principal had said that any teacher attending such a dance would be fired, any student would not graduate. But through his first winter Claude opened the manse one evening a week to the young people for dances. He got by with this on the ground that God might condone dancing that was in private.

Still the young people hankered after a public dance. In the spring the graduate class made plans for one to be held in a disused country club outside the town, which once had had a low reputation.

Claude went to plead their case before the Parent Teachers Association. There were cries of "Oh, no!" He said that if the country club was good enough for the young people it was good enough for him and Joyce, and they were going to the dance. They went, and saw that the boys and girls had a good time.

The event set Paris agog. Sober and orderly as the dance was, it stank in the nostrils of the old God, whose partisans did not need to be present to know what went on. On Sunday the Baptist minister, who had preached

the graduating class commencement sermon on the Friday, was moved to speak about it from his pulpit. He described the dance bluntly as an orgy held in a hell-hole.

It was the kind of challenge Claude ate for breakfast. He decided to preach two Sundays later on the ethics of play. Young people of the Baptist sect, who had been at the dance, undertook to put up placards through the town, announcing:

**"OUR DANCE
AT THE HELL-HOLE"**

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
YOU ARE INVITED

There was a record crowd for the sermon, overflowing into the yard. Claude said that play was a divine instinct and was not immoral at any time or in any place so long as it was play. He asked by what process of reasoning, by what Biblical authority, the fundamentalists concluded it was sinful to dance, drink, smoke or play cards.

He said that he loved the Church, but men had made it into a ghastly institution. Young people thought of it only as a place to conduct funerals, to hear about heaven, hell, demons and miracles. The fundamentalists wanted to keep "the old-time religion," which was good enough for them, although the old-time medicine, education, farming, architecture were not good enough and had been adjusted to the needs of the day. Like any other dying institution, the Church needed revivals: but revivals away from the old-time religion towards a modern religion without supernaturalism and without quotation marks.

He met the Baptist minister in the street some days later. Claude happened to be carrying under his arm a

scientific book he had just received, called *Up From the Ape*. He could not resist the temptation to thrust it at the Baptist as he came abreast of him. The Baptist gazed for a moment at the title in large red lettering, pushed the book back with an expression of deep repugnance, and walked quickly on.

The miners were deeply God-fearing men for the most part, though there were among them some powerful heathens. They liked Claude as a man and they enjoyed his pieces in the papers. But the believers among them had little more use for preachers than the heathens had. They had reason.

They came to the poolroom, and Claude put no pressure on them to attend services. Then one Sunday evening Fred Howell, a heathen coaldigger, came out of curiosity in his ragged overalls and stood way out in the dark outside the church door while Claude was preaching. He was just curious. He meant to stay for a few minutes and maybe pick up a phrase or two that he could kid the preacher about next day when they shot pool together. When he heard what Claude was saying he lingered.

The preacher was talking about the beginning of life in the world. There was absolute stillness in the beginning, he said, and then something started moving, and gradually over millions of years man developed. Science had shown that the Bible story of creation was not literally true, but there was truth in it.

"The truth is in the Bible because it's true," he went on. "It isn't true because it's there. And here is truth: Article One of the Code of Creation, of all animal life, is co-operation, mutual aid, brotherhood.

"The great sixty-foot armorplated ichthyosaurus and the monstrous dinosaur were antisocial individuals and

they are dead as the moon. Ants and bees and geese have sense enough to combine for their mutual welfare, for food. The gorilla and Hoover are fast becoming extinct. Civilized man hasn't as much sense as a goose. He tries to be an individual, to do without co-operation, and unless he gets some sense in his head mighty soon he'll die out. 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard—thou scab—and learn to be wise.'

"Do you know that even the Hottentot in Africa, the most backward of men, when he's going to eat shouts out just as loud as he can holler, and if there's another Hottentot anywhere within sound of his voice he'll share his food with him? But the Mellons and Morgans today are living on their rich tables with thousands starving within sound of their voice, and they won't share with anyone. They're not Christians. They're not even as good as Hottentots. And yet we send missionaries to make the Hottentots Christian.

"God is in co-operation and union. The body of man itself is God's model union, made up of twenty-six billion cells all working together. They all came from just one cell, and each cell needs the same things: heat, food, light, air, water. If there is a tiny wound in the body, all the cells send an army of nurses to that place until it is completely well—or the whole body perishes. If the white corpuscles start attacking the red, the body dies of pernicious anæmia. The appendix has been outgrown and is no longer necessary to the rest of the body: it is just a parasite. All the appendicitis is just the other cells crying out against the parasite. The appendix will vanish. The same must happen with society's parasites.

"Why, you cannot get past the law of union. It takes two to make a man. A good marriage is simply a good union. Every society has fallen through violation of the solidarity of the species. Look at the Pyramids: the result

of the unified work of thousands of slaves. They remain still as a monument to the eternal value of labor, but the Egyptian civilization which was built on slavery is dead.

"Good praying helps, but it won't change the world. We've had good praying. We've prayed for centuries, and the world isn't changed yet. The Children of Israel prayed and prayed and prayed—but they didn't come out of bondage till they organized. They found that to pray effectively you must pray collectively. Praying didn't help smallpox—but the discovery of vaccines did.

"Good singing won't do it either. We've had good singing. Good preaching won't do it. We've had good preaching. Something more is needed.

"Organize! It is nature's imperative. 'The truth makes us free.' We must work together to discover truth. Together. Unified. Organized.

" 'And he prayed: Lord, that they might all be one.' "

Howell went home wondering at what he had heard. It hadn't been a sermon at all, but just like listening to a man talk common sense.

He told the others about it, and all week at the mine there was talk about Preacher Williams' sermon. Most of the men did not believe it was any more than words. They were ready to bet a day's pay to a miner's chance of heaven that this preacher would shy off like a scared colt when he saw what actual organizing of workingmen in a place like Paris meant.

But next Sunday evening Howell went to the church again and took several other miners with him. He had flickered on his pay and bought him a pair of breeches so he could come and sit inside.

The sermon this time was on the text, "My Kingdom is not of this world." Most of the miners had heard that line before, and it represented for them all that they

despised about the Churches. It was the Churches' time-honored alibi for dodging the real problems of the people, the signal for all the old pie-in-the-sky stuff, about being meek and taking it on the chin for a stiff's reward of a harp and a pair of wings.

Just as he had announced years before in Auburntown, when he yet did not understand, Claude said: "The present world system is of Satan."

Now he knew why, and said so. The present system was built on a foundation of murder, covetousness, robbery, uncharitableness. The essence of it had not changed since Jesus' day, and Jesus' words meant the same now as they did then. There was nothing supernatural about them. They simply meant that the world system would have to be changed right at the foundations before his Kingdom—an era of love and justice—could begin.

Love and justice were humorous words to the miners, dependent as they were with their wives and children on bosses who loved them with blackjacks, shotguns and savage jail terms. They were forced to be idle more than half the time, and when the bosses did have use for them it was to work them so hard that a man was not fitting for his own wife; he was like a walking statue in his own home. Their condition was pitiful, and the bosses put down by force and terror every organized attempt to better it. They had had a union, but a strike had been called back in 1927, and after several miners were killed it had ended in the union being smashed, their pay slashed from eight dollars to three dollars and fifty cents a day. The average family of five was existing on less than ten dollars a week. There was not much love went with the wages, and the miners were not aiming to love the bosses much in return.

But more miners than ever began coming to the Presbyterian poolroom, and over games with the preacher

they sounded him out, to see if he really knew what he was talking about and how far he would go with it.

A hulking coaldigger said sharply and challengingly:

"You got plenty o' say-so, preacher. What we want to know is, have you got any do-so?"

"Listen, boys," Claude said. "I know what you're up against, and I'm with you teeth, toenail and cuticle. Try me.

"Get over the idea that there's something queer about a preacher talking this way. I'm a working man. When I talk of the Kingdom of God I'm really talking about good food and decent conditions for us all. The Nazarene fought for the good life for the people, and if I claim to speak his language, then I speak yours."

Skeptics among the miners shook their heads.

"That's all very fine, preacher," they said. "But you won't ever get these conditions you speak of through any church. You can talk all you want about the power of love, but what good will it do against clubs and guns and lockouts?"

"I'm not talking about getting halitosis from kissing the boss. I want to be realistic just as much as you do. Look."

He got a piece of chalk and drew on the blackboard:



"There's your divine triangle," he said. "Faith, the base: not shutting the eyes and believing something you know ain't so—but faith based on observed facts—then

refusal to be shaken from the conclusions of what you've observed. We believe we can do it; we do it.

"Then Hope—pointing up to a better condition. We can't do without hope. If we were convinced that our present condition were permanent, we would despair.

"And Love—connecting these other two. Not a sentiment that makes you want to embrace someone in emotional ecstasy—but that great driving power which, when you see a condition that needs correcting, makes you dare sacrifice yourself and co-operate with others to correct it.

"There are our weapons. If we workers don't get together and fight together—if we don't all become one, as the Nazarene said—then we're sunk. It's aggressive love I'm talking about. It's a greater power than guns, and it's the kind of power our union is going to have. What about it?"

The hulking coaldigger stroked his chin.

"Well, I'll be dawged," he said, and held out his hand to the preacher.

VI

And I will bring back the captivity of my people Israel, and they will build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them, saith Jehovah thy God.—AMOS

Never have anything to do with those who pretend to have dealings with the supernatural.—CONFUCIUS

THE great mystery of the Depression befogged the world.

The machine had broken down, and on the Paris court-house square it was the same as in every community gathering-place of city and village. The human waste products of the machine squatted and lounged, watching each other disintegrate.

They wanted to go out and produce what they needed, they knew how to produce it, there was nothing to stop them producing it except the padlocks and guns of the men who cried: "There is no profit in it!"

The miners' condition had been bad before and now grew worse every day. If they did not dig coal there was no way for them to get food and clothing for their families. Their women went out to the slagheaps for remnants of coal to keep the thin, bare limbs of the children from freezing. In the diggers' hearts bitter despair grew. It was cold on the square and there was nothing to talk about, but they could not bring themselves to go home and listen to the women and children

complaining. They played cards and snooker mechanically and endlessly, but there was little spirit in them for play when there was no work.

Claude knew how to laugh about most things, but the senselessness of this sometimes reduced him to black rage. God had given the people only time, and that they were forced to waste. There was a great Kingdom of joy and plenty to be built, and here was the brawn that should be building it, left to atrophy.

The people were impotent because the breakdown was a Chinese puzzle that they could not understand, and nobody cared to enlighten them because to understand the puzzle would, for them, have been to want to smash it. The preachers called the puzzle God; it paid their rent and grocery bills, and they wanted it smashed no more than the mine-owners and landlords. To drown reason, they intoned their message more loudly: "Let Jesus into your hearts!"

There was no organization for relief of the people's hunger. A palsied Welfare Association was unable to collect from the well-to-do enough clothing to cover the children's nakedness. Children were staying away from school because they had no clothes or shoes. Many of the others went barefoot and in rags to learn the daily lesson of reverence for the machine that reduced them to that condition. School started on alternate mornings with the chanting of "My Country 'Tis of Thee, Sweet Land of Liberty" and "Arkansas, How I Love Thee."

Pillars of the community who had a stake in the machine could not hide such great and dire poverty from themselves. They were sorry about it, but said that these were hard times for all. They bolstered up their spirits by talk of better times around the corner. Believing fervently as they did in the supernaturalism of the Bible, they were rarely troubled by rational considerations

about anything. If Jesus could walk on the water by the power of faith, if God could rain manna from heaven upon his hungry children, then faith could repair the profit machine and run it once again as smoothly as ever. They had great faith and worked it hard.

But among them were some who felt that the immediate problem must be tackled. Of these was Carey, the owner of the movie show just off the square. Finding Carey sympathetic, Claude planned with him a Sunday afternoon show to get money for clothing and shoes for the children.

It was a community matter, and Claude went to the Parent Teachers Association and the Kiwanis businessmen's fraternity to ask their co-operation. The Parent Teachers said that with moral standards breaking down everywhere this was no time to be inviting Satan into their town. Dr. Smith of the Kiwanis said: "I do not know whether your proposition would come under the head of a religious or political document, but in either case we cannot discuss it."

The other ministers of Paris were becoming seriously alarmed about the immorality of the Presbyterian newcomer. The orgy at the hell-hole had undermined the moral tone of the young people, leading some of the flower of Baptist youth astray. And the Campbellite minister had never forgotten the Sunday evening when fourteen of his most promising youngsters had walked out in a body and gone over to the poolroom church, where three of them had now become candidates for the Presbyterian ministry, to go forth and deceive the people into baptism by sprinkling.

In such a crisis it was necessary for the believers in immersion backwards to make common cause with the believers in immersion sideways against the arch-enemy. And so the guardians of foursquare faith united in circu-

lating a petition against the Sunday show. The petition did not mention what the object of the show was, for this was not important: it was a question of principle. Nearly half the adults in Paris signed the petition, when the issue was put squarely and bluntly up to their souls.

The Baptist pastor came to the manse one day and lectured Claude for an hour and forty minutes on Christian morality. He asked Claude whether he believed in the divinity of Jesus.

"Yes," Claude said, "but not the deity."

"What's the difference? There is such a thing, brother Williams, as not being converted."

Claude laughed and slapped him on the back.

"Brother," he said, "I was converted away from the things you are preaching five years ago."

Next Sunday the Baptist preached a warning to his flock that the Presbyterian minister did not believe in the divinity of Jesus.

It was not so funny when Claude considered what was at stake. He sat down and hammered out a piece on his typewriter, and went down to the newspaper offices with it. It was a stinging piece about the Kiwanis and other leading Christians of Paris who, though they themselves drove in their cars to Fort Smith for Sunday shows and golf, had signed the petition against a show in Paris for the destitute children. He wrote that at last he began to agree with the fundamentalists in denying man's descent from monkeys. The pillars of Paris, at any rate, were apparently evolved from the ostrich.

The editors said they would print the article only if Claude paid for space at usual advertising rates. Claude said if that was the way of it he would have the piece mimeographed with an explanatory note and circulate it himself all over town. The editors gave in. It was a small victory, but it relieved Claude's feelings a little.

"I was plenty obnoxious," he told Joyce when he returned home. "But not half as obnoxious as I feel. Funny thing is they act as if they liked me."

"Funny thing is, they do," said Joyce. "Only they wish they didn't."

The article showed the people for the first time what the real issue was. Their narrow attitude had been due solely to ignorance. Houser, a County Superintendent of Schools whose boy was one of Claude's gang, said that before the article three-quarters of the population were ready to mob Claude, but after it three-quarters were ready to mob the opposition. Now the American Legion agreed to sponsor the show. A Sunday was set, but on the morning of the day it was found that the town electric plant was out of order. The following Sunday it was out of order again. The electric plant seemed to be connected in some way with the Baptist church. So once again the majority did not get its way.

The conflict between the old religion and the new emerged again every time a Parisian died. There were two undertakers in Paris, competing keenly one with the other. In order that none of the ministers should seem to be favoring either one, it had become the custom for every minister to help conduct every funeral. Claude fell in with the custom although his God was not a God of the dead and he was really too busy with the living. One time a young fugitive from the law, who had killed a man in a bootleggers' brawl and then had his brains blown out in cold blood by the police, had to be buried. The body lay in the undertaking parlor for days, and as nobody else would preach his funeral, Claude agreed to do it alone. A great crowd gathered, expecting Claude to preach the youth to hell. Instead of that Claude declared before them all that society was the criminal, and ended by preaching everyone to hell except the youth.

The other ministers now decided that Claude must never be asked to preach another funeral, but must confine himself to praying at the services. Then one of the banks closed its doors as thousands of others were doing all over the country, and the sheriff, who had all his savings in it, killed himself. When it came Claude's turn to offer up a prayer at the funeral, he started to tell God his ideas about it. He said that this was a case of an inside bank robbery which resulted in murder, and that the murderers were right there in the audience. He went on in this strain for twenty minutes and said all that he would have said had he been asked to preach. After this his prayers were in little demand at funeral services.

He knew the thing he was fighting was not moral prejudice nor theological prejudice but an economic system; not a local force but a world force. All these struggles, great and small, that were going on in the world were linked together. The United States was a country with five apples for every hundred people: ninety-six people had an apple between them and the other four had an apple each. The four did not have bellies big enough to hold an apple each, but because they were corporations whose mainspring was profit they were forced to work for a still more unjust distribution of the wealth. They had more than they could eat, but blind forces drove them to fulfill Jesus' prophecy by taking away from them that had not even that which they had. In the rich year of 1929 the two hundred great corporations controlling the production and distribution system had paid less in wages than in the previous year, though their profits were more than half as big again. The same forces that molded and controlled this Christian unchristianity made it a sin to clothe the naked of Paris. Those forces were making the world a shambles of hate and murder and despair; but, by whatever means,

the man foolhardy enough to name the real criminals by name must be silenced.

Claude had decisively rejected all possibility of a Christian capitalist society. He had also now rejected the Gandhi idea of salvation through a return to the simple life. God had created men upright, and men had sought out many inventions, and he believed in men's power to rule their inventions and themselves. Even if it were possible for such a country as the United States to turn back from the machine, the idea betrayed a lack of faith in the God in man. As an organizer for the Socialist Party, Claude was working openly for abolition of the profit system. In his church he started a policy of handing over the pulpit to some labor or socialist leader on the third Sunday of each month. Yet despite his frank social and political heresy the spontaneous tendency of nearly everyone, even of those he most vigorously attacked, was to like him. He had such a way with him that he could stick his neck out farther than most people before getting hit on the head.

A stranger watching him walk through the streets of Paris, passing the time of day with this citizen and that, would have said that here was a man loved by all classes. His warm candidness disarmed his enemies when they were face to face with him. He loved people because his first article of faith was that the divine was in every man. He loved his enemies because he was capable of hating the forces that crushed the divine in men. And apart from the great mass of toilers for whom any social change must be for the better because their condition could hardly be worse, only a few people in the district were not his enemies. The force of selfish interest prevailed, as prevail it must in a world that was not of God. The crazy social structure gave little protection or security to anyone, but as its declared assailant he could not strike

at any brick in it without antagonizing all who feared some other structure might give them even less.

What crystallized and sharpened the antagonism was the help he gave the miners in reorganizing their union. Howell, Bert Loudermilk, Red Turnipseed and other more advanced and determined miners came many times to the manse to discuss and draw up plans. The men had little education, and the preacher led the discussions and wrote their letters and drew up resolutions for them. He went about to the various mines in the district talking union in terms of Christianity. The foundations were carefully laid and at every mine enthusiasm flowered. Over the signature, "Claude Williams, a Fool by Calling and Preference," articles appeared in the papers explaining to the small-merchant and professional and farmer groups why unions were not only Christian but to the general advantage of the community.

Once he wrote:

If I were a coal operator, stockholder or industrial leader I would patriotically oppose Trade Unionism. In this I would have the militia, the law and the Supreme Court on my side. Having been taught in public school, high school and college the myths that all heroes have been military men, that ours is a Christian nation and our most perfect law is founded upon the Christian Bible, and that "property right" is one of our most sacred principles, I would believe myself to be right.

Trade Unionism takes the insane and radical position that the human element is the important factor in industry; that industry should be readjusted so as to serve society instead of merely enriching the individual; that the man who invests skill and brawn should receive a just return for his investment; that the man who merely invests his money, which he may have inherited or stolen, is by no means the greatest investor.

There were as many deaths from industrial accidents in America during the eighteen months after the Armistice as

from enemy bullets during the eighteen months before. Most of these were the result of greedy carelessness on the part of industrialists in their mad race for phenomenal profits.

Constructive unionism would demand a compensation for industrial hazards so high that I would be forced to eliminate all death-traps, leg-breakers and human sausage-mills from my concern. This would reduce my chance of making an unreasonable and unjust profit without regard to human life or social welfare. The Nazarene taught that a man was of greater value than a dumb brute. But industrialism dubs Him as an impractical idealist whose teachings are only to be indifferently repeated to Sunday School children. The mere human beings who risk their necks and limbs can be replaced for a pittance upon which their wives and babes will continue to starve—provided unionism is defeated. Therefore, as a loyal one-hundred-percenter and a good institutional Christian or as an avowed savage, I would oppose unionism.

Then, too, if I should decide to violate my Bureau or Association and undersell my competitor, I could again reduce the wage of my workingmen and thereby secure a margin of profit which would enable me to cripple my competitor, paralyze the business of the town and make a profit for absentee stockholders who may live in Kansas City or China. And if there should be a concerted effort on the part of the laborers to organize and force recognition of their union, I would also circulate counterfeit contracts, fallacious reports and threats about drawing the pumps and letting "the damned holes fill up with water."

Unionism demands that no industry shall be permitted to maintain a thousand or two semistarved men, women and children in each of a hundred communities, in a perpetual state of pellagra, cholera, dysentery and indecency. To maintain union standards would reduce my chances of becoming a wealthy man at the expense of society. And individual wealth, regardless of how it is secured, is the measure of success in our system. Therefore I would oppose unionism.

The time came when throughout the field the union

spirit burned fierce in the coaldiggers, so that when officials of the United Mine Workers of America came to join forces with Claude's group, to set up locals at every mine, there could be born almost overnight a stronger organization than had existed before. In the patient building up of this atmosphere the preacher of Paris had traveled thousands of miles back and forth through the field. The mine-owners had enough troubles already taking care of their plunging stocks and shares, and as soon as they heard a hint of their workers organizing they resisted violently, bringing in paid gunmen from the cities. It was a situation that workers' organizations had had to face everywhere in their early stages, and Claude was not deterred by it, though often he had to hold meetings in the dark so the men could attend without the bosses' spies identifying them.

No sooner was the union reorganized than a strike was called for recognition throughout the western Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma field. Claude gave every moment he could spare to the strike, driving by day and night from one field to another. He took no thought for his own accommodation, eating rarely and irregularly and sleeping where he flopped, often on the floor of a miner's overcrowded cabin. He found the miners and their families enduring great privations everywhere: at Russellville, Clarksville, Spadra, Jenny Lind, Midland, and over the Oklahoma line at Poteau and Hartshorne.

He had learned to know the miners well and he could give them a message to temper their morale and faith in their cause. He took the Bible and showed that God was in the union. It was God who had called the first strike, he said, back there in Egypt when Moses led the brick-makers. He quoted the parable of the rich man who did not grow a crop, did not dig coal, but claimed all the fruits of others' work: so the death sentence was passed

upon him. "Woe unto you that are full for ye shall be hungry. Woe unto you if men speak well of you."

Jesus, he said, had come to tell men that the world was going to be turned upside down, inside out and hinderpart before, making the last first and the first last. He had blessed the poor and those that hungered and thirsted after righteousness: not because it was a virtue to be poor but because it was the poor's destiny, since only they could understand the necessity and inevitability of it, to lead the way forward into the Kingdom of God on earth. "Great is your name in heaven"—in the new godly society. And through the union, which gave strength to the weak, the change had to be made.

The miners were amazed at his words because it had seemed to many of them that they had God as well as the bosses to fight, and that was why some of them had turned heathen. When they heard the Paris preacher, the heathen element said that this God was all right with them; and the religious element, some of whom had hung back in doubt of the ethical position, threw reservations aside and said they were ready to go all the way with the union.

It was not the preacher's words alone that brought this about. The men were impressed by his physical example. They knew, as only people in their condition could know, the implications of what he was doing. He had placed himself without reserve at the disposal of the union and its officials, and he had never been called upon in vain. He was one of them and showed it by sharing everything. They recognized it by electing him a union member.

He was taking great physical risks. The mines near which he spoke were being worked by scab labor brought from outside under protection of hired gunmen. He did not get shot, but the month after he made his first public speech favoring the strike he did not receive the half of

his salary which the local church members were supposed to pay him. There was some delay in collecting the money, the elders explained, and it would soon be straightened out. But another month ended with the strike still on, and he still received nothing.

Outwardly the leading citizens of Paris, including the mine-owners, were as friendly to him as ever. They made no open issue of his work for the strike. Some of them even complimented him on his article in the paper calling for a five-year plan for Paris, to be worked out at a joint conference of all the community's organizations. The piece was an attack on anarchy, and they sincerely believed they were as much against it as he was. But he was not merely writing and speaking, but doing. He was known all over Arkansas now for his active flouting of the respectable mores, for his refusal to compromise on any front. And he constantly gave them opportunities to attack him on moral and ethical grounds. The more actively he worked for bread and security for the people, the more violent such attacks became. One time he wrote a letter to a friend, who sent it to the editor of the *Denver Post*, and it was published.

I am [he had written] a minister in Arkansas, where the funny-monkeyists monkey and the fundamentalists fundle, where they pass Anti-Evolution Bills and Anti-Sunday Baseball Bills—and let miners and other workmen die without compensation; where they begin religion at the far end, where a houseful of children who can neither be fed nor clothed is the “will of God” and sex education or intelligent birth control is immoral. I am drawing fire for preaching a series of sermons on the latter now. Last week the school board voted against a gymnasium on the ground that it might be used by the Parent Teachers Association for dances, since such are included on their national program.

The letter was picked up by the *Paris Progress*, and reprinted under the heading

ARKANSAS RECEIVES SOME MORE GOOD (?) ADVERTISING

It was the editor's way of expressing the leading citizens' thought that Claude was now committing the unforgivable sin: biting the hand that owed him the money for his food.

It was tactless of the preacher, but he could not find it in himself to compromise with the old God who opposed men's struggle to fill their bellies. He organized a Sunday afternoon baseball game in behalf of the children of the unemployed. When the announcements went up, the local Prosecuting Attorney called at the manse and said that seventyfive members of the Baptist church had asked him to prosecute Claude if the game were played.

"Do your duty, Dick," Claude said to him, "and I'll do mine. You are a candidate for re-election, aren't you? I'll be on the field Sunday with the boys."

On Sunday afternoon five hundred miners assembled, half of them at the ball park and half at the jail to see there was no trouble. The teams played their game undisturbed and the police stayed indoors. The proceeds went to help families that had reached the pellagra stage of starvation.

Attacks were also being directed against his theological heresies. He learned that Dr. Gillespie was receiving complaints not only about the pool table and dances and birth-control sermons, but about his atheistic repudiation of supernatural belief. He was concerned by this, for the encouragement he had received from Dr. Gillespie had meant much to him. He could not have taken so aggressive a line if he had not known that, while a large element in Presbyterianism was still serving the old God,

there was a growing group even in the high places that was ready for realistic, prophetic religion.

Gillespie wrote from Little Rock in the same friendly way as ever, but implied that other officials of the Presbytery were unhappy about the Paris situation. He advised Claude to proceed more cautiously in his retreat from the supernatural position.

Claude wrote back:

I had intended to write you at some length in regard to my position on the "supernatural," but, Doctor, there is something nauseating about this affair. It seems so petty. Yet it has been exaggerated to such proportions that one might infer that there is someone who really knows something about the subject. I should like to meet such a person—if such there is or has been from *pithecanthropus erectus* to Einstein. But let him not be dogmatic about SUPER-nature until he can first tell me what Nature is. So far, I know nothing about the supernatural. If man can know the supernatural, then man is supernatural. The supernatural thus becomes the natural and vice versa, forcing a paradox the only solution to which, it seems to me, is that one of the terms is a misnomer.

A week later Gillespie wrote:

There is no disposition by anybody to quibble on theological terms. You have the sympathetic interest of the members of your Presbytery in the work that you are doing in Paris. While I have no disposition to dictate as to your choice of methods in your work, yet I must insist that whatever your provocation—and doubtless it was great—it was not the part of wisdom or discretion or in keeping with the dignity of the Presbyterian Church or any other Church, to advertise your Sunday night service with a poster headed "Our Dance At The Hell-Hole Presbyterian Church."

For about a minute after he read this letter and considered the implications of it with regard to certain pious

citizens of Paris, Claude groaned with a loud voice and tore his hair.

He had no time to compose himself for a reply because Red Turnipseed came with Howell and some other miners to discuss plans for the great workers' demonstration at Fort Smith. The trifling question of his own standing with his Church had to be pushed aside.

The demonstration took place a few days later. Thousands of men who had been tossed aside by the social machine came into Fort Smith in trucks, in wagons, on foot. They formed a procession with banners demanding work and bread, and marched down broad Garrison Street through the heart of Arkansas' second city. It was the biggest labor demonstration there had ever been in the middle South.

Next day a four-inch report on page thirteen of the *Fort Smith Times-Record* admitted that the procession took over an hour to pass the office.

Sharing the miners' struggle with them day by day, sitting in on their councils, learning to know these gristly toilers whom society buried and forgot, Claude's pride in his own workingclass origin grew; likewise his confidence in workers' organizations as instruments of change.

They were fine people, the miners. They were the salt of the earth, linked in a fellowship of sweat and pride. And it seemed to Claude that, though the Presbyterian Church of Paris might be good enough for the Presbyterian old guard to worship in, it was less than good enough for the miners and farm laborers and unemployed to hold union meetings in. The union represented for him the nobility of the human spirit, the one increasing purpose of the prophets.

And out of talks with the miners as he shot pool with them came a big idea, a plan crystallizing all the aspira-

tions of the people for a social rebirth there in the hills of western Arkansas. It was a plan to go out and quarry the stone of Arkansas, and build with it a great temple in the half-acre of ground adjoining the present church.

The plan was collectively conceived and collectively it grew like a snowball swiftly rolling. The temple would be dedicated to the unlimited, living, growing God of love and justice, the God beyond sect or race. They would call it the Proletarian Church and Labor Temple. It would be built by the people without a dollar of capitalist money, and it would be for the people: a union hall, a gymnasium, a temple of culture, study, worship and recreation.

Through the hungry people of the district ran a current of enthusiasm for the plan, unifying employed and unemployed, striker and small enterpriser, farmer and miner, Negro and white. In unexpected places it awoke some dormant spirit. An architect contributed blueprints for a fine, massive building. Small business men offered free sand and gravel, paint, electrical and plumbing work. Miners, farmers, masons and carpenters, white and colored, pledged free labor. To buy cement for the foundation Claude cashed in two of the four life insurance policies on which he had been paying since Auburntown days. And less than a month after the birth of the idea, construction began.

Striking miners came by the truckload from fields as far as thirty miles away. There would be shifts of as many as eighty men on the job. In the midst of the lot a great wooden cross was set up, and a banner placed on it with the words:

THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE LIFE,
AND HAVE IT MORE ABUNDANTLY

The men worked like coolies around the cross, digging eight hundred feet of three-foot trench, hauling in tons of rock which they had quarried. Running and singing, they toiled on sometimes till nearly dawn. Among them worked the preacher, handling the stone, hauling sand and cement. In five days over four hundred work-hours had been contributed. They sang at their work because they were building something for themselves, something symbolic of their union comradeship and the hopes they placed in it for a Kingdom.

The reactions of Presbyterian officials to the plan varied. When Dr. Hefner, Moderator of the Fort Smith Presbytery, came through Paris, Claude showed him pictures of the Proletarian Church as it would look when finished.

"What?" said Dr. Hefner. "A church with that name? I don't believe in class churches."

"Well, you have one," Claude said.

"No. All classes can come to my church."

"Sure they can. But they don't."

Dr. Gillespie understood the spirit of the enterprise at once and was enthusiastic. He promised to help with some money from the Board of Missions. Claude thanked him, but did not push the matter. He wondered whether such aid might not tie his hands, forcing him to be conservative for the sake of an institution. He wanted the Temple to be free of institutions linked with the existing social system, because any institution was by its nature more conservative than any unit in it.

Meanwhile the Presbyterian elders of Paris were looking on in surprise. Since this strange new God of their preacher's was capable of inspiring the miners and unemployed to build them a new church for nothing, they were not going to stand in the way. They were as startled as Dr. Hefner by the name Claude proposed for the

church, and the document he prepared setting forth its aims seemed to them wild, irresponsible and almost meaningless. But apparently it was the basis upon which the miracle of free labor was taking place, and powerful forces in the national Church seemed to favor it. The pressure of mass enthusiasm was so great that the Colonel on the church board, who was the district's representative in the State Assembly, had to co-operate. So the other board members also signed Claude's nine-point program for the Proletarian Church, dedicating it

To apply the teachings of Jesus to all phases of life, spiritual, social, recreational, educational, industrial;

To proclaim the dignity of labor and the creation of the life abundant for all without regard to race, color, caste, sex or creed;

To stand for the sacredness of personality, and to consider the human factor as the most important element in industry;

To protest the destruction of human life, whether by war, capital punishment, mobs, police, hazardous conditions in industry, insufficient wages or inadequate relief;

To proclaim the Kingdom of God—meaning an order of righteousness, equality and brotherhood in which suffering from hunger, cold and nakedness shall cease; to hold that the abundant resources of land, sea and air can provide bountifully for all;

To agitate for the redistribution of wealth through taxation, compensation and insurance;

To guarantee the rights of freedom of speech and assembly provided by the Constitution to all from the most radical to the most conservative;

To demonstrate that the creative impulse is greater than the acquisitive instinct, that co-operation is superior to competition, and that the desire to be useful and original is a stronger incentive than the profit motive;

To demonstrate the solidarity of labor, the independence of workers; that labor can create its own institutions under the most adverse conditions, during a strike and in a panic.

When the foundations were well advanced, plans were made for laying the corner-stone. Documents were to be buried in the stone recording the state of human society in which the enterprise was born: the United States lynching score for 1931; the names of Jim Crow States, of States without workers' compensation or social security laws, and of all the Christian sub-sects and denominations; copies of the Southern States' Anti-Evolution laws and of proceedings at the Scopes monkey trial in Tennessee; a yellow-dog employment contract by which working people were offered jobs on condition they did not join a union; and unemployment figures. Together with these records Claude aimed to bury in the corner-stone the names of all workers and union locals that had helped build the Temple, and copies of the writings which had first shown him and Joyce the nature of God. Crowning all were to be the words of Will Durant:

In my ideal church all would be welcome who accepted the golden rule; there would be no other test. I vision a church as all-embracing as Christ's affections, accepting all and rejecting none. It would honor truth and beauty as well as goodness, this church of mine; it would nourish every art, and make its every chapel and cathedral a citadel of adult education, bringing science and history, literature and philosophy, music and art to those too old for school, and yet young enough to learn. But it would hold knowledge barren without brotherhood; it would allow every division and doubt, except that in the end love is the highest wisdom.

Three months of sacrifice and strife, of picketing and parading and clashes with the professional gunmen

brought in to break the strike, ended with the arrival of a telegram from UMWA headquarters, saying the owners of all but three mines had recognized the union and signed a contract with it. As far as the Paris district was concerned, the first round of the fight was over.

There was a great celebration on the courthouse square that evening, and Claude was chief speaker. Next day, another speaker at the celebration was attacked in the street by some company gunmen, who struck him with a hammer and beat him with their fists.

"We'll get that damned preacher next time," one of them said.

A deputy sheriff met Claude on the street and said:

"I want to deputize you, preacher—give you a gun, so you can leave that so-and-so lying right where you next meet him. You'll never be hurt." He held out a gun for Claude to take.

He was a little too effusive and Claude smelled a mice, amateur though he still was in political maneuvering. There was little love between the preacher and the upholders of law and order. He would not take the gun. He had met the terrorism of company gunmen before, and he was confident that the miners could take care of those people in the right way, without guns. But as he was walking home to the manse a car passed him and he heard a man say:

"There goes that goddamned son of a bitch."

The car slowed down but did not stop, and he went on home to dinner. Jess Barnett, a miner whose wife had pellagra and had benefited from the Sunday ball game, had killed his lone hog and brought Claude a ham, and Joyce was preparing it with real country-style gravy.

The Paris miners returned to work with a union contract guaranteeing them four dollars and four cents a

day. It meant a possible income of \$300 a year for a family of five or six on the basis of the number of days the mines were operating. It was a splitting agreement, because it left the miners of three fields to continue the strike in virtual isolation.

It was not the agreement the men wanted, but it was a victory of a sort, and many were grateful for any compromise that would let them work again. The miners felt that the agreement had been made with the owners, without themselves being consulted, by the national and district heads of the UMWA, whom the miners had not elected and rarely saw. Declaring the men unable to guide their own affairs, the UMWA grouped them into Districts under the command of a president appointed from above. Arkansas and Oklahoma were District 21 under a tsar in Oklahoma. The agreement with the owners was that union dues must be checked off each miner's pay at the source and sent direct to headquarters.

That was the kind of union it was, and the men had to take it or else be isolated from the rest of the movement. Claude was getting his first lesson in labor union realities in unchristian society. He could see that the struggle was just beginning. The mine-owners, finding it impossible to resist the workers' demand for a union, had made the best of the situation by coming to an understanding with the union tsars, to ensure that not the rank and file of coaldiggers but a few high-salaried officeholders should control union policy. Thus even within the union the people had the top-down control system to fight.

Yet, imperfect as the union was, the men had no cause to regret having fought and suffered for it. It was their task now to fight on inside the union for democracy, and then at last the people would have real power.

The picture would have discouraged the preacher if

he had not received at this time a note from Dr. Gillespie, enclosing a letter written by Dr. Warren H. Wilson, the Board of Missions' national head.

Dr. Wilson had written:

I am astonished at Williams. I hope he will live through it. It is a daring and radical thing he is doing, but he has the Gospel spirit in him. That is what we all desire to do sometime in our ministry. More power to his elbow and more wisdom to his mind. It is delightful to see how his own church is apparently supporting him and the working men are helping him. He has some of that breath-taking courage that the greatest Christians have had in their difficult measures.

He carried the letter about with him, together with another document of which he was rather proud. It was his certificate of ordination, which the miners, in token of respect for the first practising Christian they had met, had stamped all around the border with official seals of the United Mine Workers of America.

VII

Do not suppose that I came to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law: and a man's own family will be his foes. Anyone who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And anyone who does not take up his cross and follow where I lead, is not worthy of me.

—MATTHEW

Merely to deny religion is futile. It is a dialectical result of man's essential nature being negated by material conditions of life.—MARX

PLAYING Satan to the God of the coalowners and landlords of Paris, Arkansas, was heavy work. It was as well that Claude had little time for pondering on the fate that had cast him in the rôle.

Some force was carrying him forward into clashes with the people whose friendship he needed for comfort and success. He did not know whether he could resist the force, but anyhow he did not want to resist it.

On the whole he was enjoying himself. His rôle called for constant fighting, and he liked a good fight. He had Joyce to laugh with, which was good, because the harlequinade of God holding out a Kingdom on a gold dish and man fighting him off for very life had to be either laughed or cried about. He had the guiding stimulation of Joyce's clear instinct and vigorous thinking when the direction of the fight became confused.

Yet there were times when, in a brief lull, a black cur-

tain descended on his spirit. It was not a curtain of doubt or misgiving, but of isolation. The name of his theater of action was itself a mockery. Hardly anyone from the world of ideas and wide horizons ever came to Paris. He had only the written word to remind him that he was part of a world movement to force a Christian solution of mankind's greatest crisis. Very occasionally he had word of what his old companions Kester, West and Rodgers were doing. Without any further contact with each other, each of them had become disillusioned about absolute pacifism and had got a new militancy, because, as Claude had discovered, you could not go to the bosses with a Bible on your arm and a Please, Mister on your lips; the bosses would not capitulate, for they had no regard for personality. Don West was now working with the coalminers of Kentucky and West Virginia, Kester with the miners of Wilder, Tennessee, and Rodgers with the industrial workers in the east.

Over the whole dark amphitheater of the South there were but a few such pioneer leaders, scattered at wide distances. They needed contact with one another in order to co-ordinate their strategy, but the fight raging hot around them gave them little respite. To Claude, a mere handclasp from them would have meant much.

A group of young people from North and South had set up a beacon of leadership down to the southwest of Paris, in the Ouachita Hills near the Oklahoma line. It was called Commonwealth College.

In a forest clearing near the town of Mena some rude classrooms, dormitories and a library had been built, back in the days before the great crisis. The college aimed to preserve the traditional folk-culture of the South which the people, preoccupied with the struggle to exist, were forgetting. The program had become more materialistic as it was understood how the degradation of

the people's physical condition stood between them and all cultural things. With the crisis a new group had taken over the helm, to concentrate on the direct task of organizing class-struggle unions. Sharecroppers, industrial workers and unemployed, some of whom could not read or write, were brought there to learn the nature of the crisis and the way out. Teaching them and studying with them were young fighters from the more developed and organized North. People were coming from all over the country, and the remote forest clearing in western Arkansas had thus become a contact with the main revolutionary movement.

Claude began to hear a good deal about Commonwealth, and the knowledge that it was there, less than a hundred miles away, made him feel less isolated. One day a party of students and teachers from the college drove into Paris in a dusty old truck, and he found that they had been hearing a good deal about him.

They were gay, friendly young people, roughly dressed like any workers, but with Northern accents and an aura of a wider world about some of them. For Claude and Joyce, talking with them was a refreshment of the spirit.

They described the community life at Commonwealth, where all participated as equals in work and study and recreation, learning the comradeship of shared poverty. They said the educational program on the campus was being broadened more and more so that they could go out and take an active part in the Southern labor struggle. They had this old truck, and when there was money for gasoline they went where the fight was hottest, taking a militant, realistic message to the rank and file of workers in mine and industry. Now this group was heading for the Harlan coalfield in Kentucky, where terror naked and brutal was being used to prevent the men organizing a union and bettering their condition.

The Commonwealth people were going to try a new experiment there. They were going to take up positions near the mines and distribute leaflets on which was printed the Bill of Rights guaranteeing every American freedom of speech and assembly and security of person.

"You are risking your lives," Claude said. "They don't recognize any law up there except the law of club and gun. They have never heard of the Bill of Rights. You might just as well circulate the Communist Manifesto: it would be no more revolutionary to those people."

"Well, it will be interesting," said Leon Webb, leader of the Commonwealth group.

"Yes," said Claude. He was excited by the Christian spirit in these men. It seemed to him that Commonwealth was the most Christian thing he had heard of in the South, and he said so.

Webb laughed good-naturedly. He said he was a Marxist. With much of Jesus' philosophy he had no quarrel, but he could not believe in God. He held to the theory of class struggle as the key to man's development, and of the destiny of the working class, led by the industrial proletariat, to lead the way by struggle into the new society without class. He wanted to do no man violence, but history showed that those who profited by any decaying system used violence to defend it against those who would change it. The English had violently defended their mercantile stake in the American colonies in 1776, the feudal planters had violently defended their stake in slavery in 1861. He did not know how anyone who had seen what Claude had seen in the coalfields could deny that the modern owner class used violence to defend its stake in capitalism, to try to stave off the new society of universal plenty. It was Nature's law that new life must be born in pain. The violence was unavoidable, and the working class must be realistically prepared for it.

Claude found the Marxian theory interesting. He had studied it a little, and while he needed no further convincing of the necessity to end capitalism, he could not see the problem from this simple class standpoint. Economic interest might be the principal but it was not the only motive explaining men's actions. Human nature was too complex and infinitely variable for people to be thus broadly classified into owner-class villains and worker-class heroes. There were all shades of good and bad in both, and if the workers came on top, humanity would not necessarily be more Christian, though that would create the conditions for Christian society. Marxists reminded him of Catholics; they were so sectarian, so dogmatic, so obstinate against all human modification of their theories. But he always thought of the experiment somebody made with a frog: when the frog's brain was taken out and a pin was stuck in him he always jumped the same way, but when he was stuck in the same place with his brain connected up, nobody could tell which way he would jump. It was like that with men and women. Their brains, each one as individual as their fingerprints, were queer unaccountable things. When a person tried to deduce how they would act from theories, that was when they fooled you.

Claude told Webb that, disheartened as he was by the spectacle of priestly pharisees using religion to keep the masses in subjection, he still saw religion as the only instrument capable of leading mankind across the last mountain range into the promised land. Neither with capitalists nor with workers in power could society be Christian unless there existed a special group, trained to study and know the factors on both sides of every question and struggle, and thus to act as moral and spiritual signposts. Such a group must have spiritual authority, not imposed from above, but freely vested in it by the people

on the basis of their faith in its objectiveness. Only such a group could steer the volcanic forces of social change clear of the rocks of chaos and anarchy, so that the last state of society should not be worse than the first.

And under capitalism all groups and institutions except the Churches were bound to be conditioned by their own economic interests. The Churches, if they were true to themselves, were concerned only with the broadest human values. It was the class blindness of the present property-owners that caused them not to see that the change to socialism was for the ultimate benefit of all. The Churches were in a special position to correct that blindness or, in cases where it could not be corrected, to coerce effectively. The owner class used violence against the workers because it saw them as highwaymen seeking to rob it, but against the Churches of Christ it dared not use violence. Hence it was within the power of the Churches to make the social change come peacefully.

For him, then, Claude said, the problem was to capture the Churches for Christ. For as long as they preached that supernatural, priestly religion which was the very antithesis of the Christian spirit, they could play no part but that of hired sycophant to the *status quo*. It was inside the Churches that the first revolution was needed. After that, when the Churches were free of ties to special interests and institutions, when Proletarian Temples sprang up everywhere dedicated to the people's material and spiritual betterment, the Kingdom would come quickly. All his experience with the miners and Negroes and poor toiling people had confirmed his belief that the voice of God, speaking with the symbols of prophetic religion, was the voice to which they would listen. God was the absolute Good, outside and apart from class and race and creed. When the people saw God in the union, nothing could stop them.

The talk drifted to questions of finance, and Claude asked Webb where he got funds for carrying on the militant Commonwealth program in medieval Arkansas.

Webb laughed a little sadly.

"From Moscow," he said. "Everyone in the district knows that the Comintern voted us a huge grant in roubles—everyone, that is, except ourselves. We are still waiting for the money and hope it comes soon; but it seems Stalin has lost our address. Meanwhile we have to rely on a few generous people up North who know the conditions here and believe in our work. The fact that we've been able to carry on at all almost makes me believe in miracles. We're so poor that if every man and woman of us didn't put in four hours' farm and maintenance work a day, we'd starve. Where do you get your money?"

"I'm living on the interest of the money I owe. . . . I am owed a salary by the church membership. I have cashed in three life-insurance policies and used up my savings, and the miners and unemployed are giving dollars and labor for the new Temple."

"Preacher," said Webb, "God or no God, you are getting Moscow gold too—only you don't know it yet. You soon will."

The talk ended late with Claude and the Commonwealth group agreeing on ways in which they could work together, for there was no conflict between the objectives for which both were striving. The visitors went on their way. Meeting and talking with them had given Claude and Joyce a lift. They sat up until dawn developing the practical possibilities of the revolution within the Churches of which Claude had spoken. They outlined a Fellowship of Christian Revolutionists—"a left-wing organization of realistic Christians dangerously proclaiming and practising the principle of love, aggressively exercising the methods of non-violent coercion, moral

suasion and education—no end can ever justify other means.”

A few days later Webb wrote to say what had happened at Harlan. The clothes they had taken with them for distribution among the striking miners had been seized and destroyed. The opinion of the Bill of Rights held by Harlan law-and-order had been demonstrated on the persons of the Commonwealth visitors. They had been stripped, tied to trees, and beaten. Webb said he had been hurt, but, as a Marxist, not surprised. He added that their most helpful ally in Harlan had been Don West, who was working among the miners in daily danger of his life.

The strike was over in most of District 21 and the miners had a union again. But they felt a greater need than ever for leadership. The appointed union tsar whose word was law for the District had returned to his headquarters in Oklahoma. While they were rounding up dues-paying members the union officials had been very eloquent about the abuses the miners suffered, but now nothing more was heard about these abuses. The men still worked under conditions of great danger, and were maimed and killed for lack of simple safety devices so that the owners might have more profit. Most of the tiny increase in daily wage scales went in dues, and little of this money trickled back to the locals.

But now there was something new, a beam of light, on the national horizon. Faced with the collapse of the producing and distributing machinery, and with the impotence of old political faiths to deal with it, the people of America had swept the New Deal into office. It was not a change in which the miners and toilers of Arkansas had had any direct hand. The poll-tax, which the planter aristocracy had first enacted to deprive Ne-

groes of their rights, put voting beyond the dreams of the average Southerner of any color. But seemingly this New Deal was pledged to start the wheels to turning again, and the miners let themselves hope.

The diggers hungered for enlightenment about their condition, about the policies of the new Government, about their union and its strength and weakness. They could not get it from the remote officials whose salaries they paid, who took the checked-off dues and wrote letters to the locals on fancy stationery signed "Yours Truly." But from the Paris preacher, who received nothing from them, they could get it. The bosses' attempts to discredit him in their eyes would have been enough to convince them he was their true friend, even if he had not already convinced them by sharing their struggle and hardship. They had in him a leader and brother who not only preached brotherhood, but practised it, who would give all he had and hold back nothing. They gave him the credit for reorganizing the District, which they had believed to be impossible only a few months before.

From locals near and far came invitations, penciled on rough pieces of paper, for him to come and speak. "Some of the boys in local said you would come up and make us a talk any time we wanted you to come," they wrote, "so we made up some money to pay your gasoline and oil expense. If you will let us know a day before you arrive we will arrange to welcome you with a large gathering at our church." However great the difficulties might be, Claude refused no invitation.

There was less rest for him now than during the strike. He went from mine to mine speaking, and for days at a time Joyce did not see him. His gift of tongues and his simple understanding made all marvel. There was no subject on which he could not speak fittingly at a minute's notice. He knew his facts and figures and he hit hard

where it was needed. Hecklers could not best him because his wit was quicker than theirs. The counsel he gave was forthright, vigorous and wise.

The miners always wanted him to speak of the new Temple, which was a great symbol to them. He told them it was theirs, and pointed out the rôle it might play in the people's fight for the good life. He spoke also of the labor press which he believed should be set up in the Temple. Without their own paper the working people could not fight effectively, for the commercial press had become nothing more than a billboard for advertisers. The paper he advocated would speak for all the humble voiceless people of the region, from bank clerks to ditch-diggers.

When he had talked of these things to eleven UMWA locals, 5,198 of their 5,200 members had voted to assess themselves a dollar each to be checked off their pay for the Temple and the paper. His faith in the idea of the Temple, in what it could do materially and spiritually for the people, was confirmed by the men's voluntary sacrifice. Knowing what the sacrifice meant to people living in such poverty, he became more deeply conscious of the obligation it placed upon him.

At Hackett, Arkansas, he met a relief committee from Hartshorne, Oklahoma, one of the three mines where the strike remained unsettled. The condition there, he learned, was desperate. There was nothing he could do but cancel everything for a few days and go to Hartshorne.

The Hartshorne miners had about reached the end. What he saw there in his first day made him want to go out and do violence. Wageless for nearly four months, the people were hollow-faced, burning-eyed, with hardly enough rags to cover them. The strikers had nothing to do but picket and watch their women and children starve.

They walked feebly up and down, shivering in their rags, outside the mine in which unorganized men from other districts worked under cover of machine-guns.

Claude was sickened by the mechanical, inhuman system that sought to keep one group of workers starving by taking advantage of the hunger of their brother-toilers. It was naked brutality.

In the midst of the town was a graceful, roomy house in which the owner of the mine lived with his childless wife.

Claude went about visiting the people. A prematurely aged woman with five children had just half a cup of sorghum molasses in her kitchen. She sat motionless in her bare shack, through the rotten cracked walls of which the icy wind blew. Her lethargy was a terrible symbol of the hopelessness into which many of the people were sinking. In another shack near by he talked with three men who said they believed nothing but violence would have any effect on the mine-owners who still resisted the union. The owners stopped at no kind of violence, and it was the only language they understood. The three men had a plan to make bombs out of kerosene tanks, phosphorus and high life, and dump them from a car under the tips of the three open-shop mines. It would destroy the men's livelihood, but that was better than standing by while scabs stole their jobs.

They asked the preacher to come in with them on the plan, and his mood was such that he was almost tempted to agree. Ever since he began to think about social problems he had been a pacifist, in the workers' struggle as in international disputes. He had always held that violence and terror defeated the ends of the workers; they must demonstrate the rightness of their cause by fighting for it in a right way. Reason was almost overcome by the squalor and suffering he had seen at Hartshorne, but, forcing his emotion under control, he advised the men to bide their

time a little longer. He could not rid their minds of the idea of violence, but he rationalized that violence on such a small scale was hopeless.

As he left the shack he felt himself torn inwardly by the agony of these people. One of the men walked with him down the gray, darkening street. Claude glanced at him, and there were tears running down his face. They came near the mine-owner's house and the man stopped, turning towards the windows in which cozy lights glowed.

"Preacher," he said, "I know what you say is right, that we got to keep hold on ourselves. I'm not a murderer. But when I see so much suffering, and one man against us all, sometimes I think I'll go up to his door and ring the bell, and just let him have it with a gun, and take the consequences. It'd be only what he deserves. I know he is murdering women and children by the score."

The worst thing was that there was division in the strikers' ranks. The most religious among them, half crazed by want, were beginning to hearken to the priestly pharisees' warning that the union oath they had taken was contrary to the spirit of Gentle Jesus Meek and Mild. Others, including some of those who believed most fervently in unions, were bitterly disillusioned by the way the UMWA leaders seemed to have betrayed them. Doubt and disillusion were burning up the men's morale faster than starvation and exposure.

They came by the hundred, white and Negro and Indian, to hear Claude at the big Friday night meeting. They jammed the hall tight, and many of the faces as they waited for the preacher to speak seemed to say that they had but little strength of their own left; he would have to give them something to take out of that hall with them or they would not be accountable for what might happen.

Claude used the union obligation as his text and preached on it. When he spoke to the miners a power took hold of him and carried him forward. He started out from certain of the basic principles that were God as he saw it, and then he was caught up by the power and, becoming attuned with those things that most vitally unified his listeners into a group-force, he spoke with the voice of that unity, and there could be no telling where he would end up. There was nothing mysterious about the power; it was simply the unity that brought the audience together.

The striking miners of Hartshorne were thinking about violence, and it was about this that he ended by speaking. He uttered the phrase, "The wrath of the Lamb," and paused so that all could consider it.

He said that anyone who could not understand this knew nothing of the true spirit of Jesus, who came to fulfill the prophets. The prophets were not afraid to testify for God: "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies." For the very reason that Christianity was a religion of love, it was bound to hate the system of the pharisaical destroyers of life, of the rich oppressors of the divine spirit. The Nazarene had said, "Love your enemies," but his was a white-hot love with a blazing hatred for all that stood in the way of a society based on love. He had driven the moneychangers from the temple with a whip; he had condemned to death the man who harmed a child; and he had sentenced Dives, the rich man, to hell. He had overturned property when it was being used to exploit personality. And yet one of the highest courts in America, which was supposed to be a Christian country, had decided that "of the three fundamental principles which underlie government—the protection of life, liberty and property—the chief of these is property." And a Pope who called himself

God's representative on earth had said: "The chief thing is the duty of safeguarding private property by legal enactment and protection."

Let them not mistake such utterances for Christianity, the preacher said. They were nothing but the deceptions of worldly priests and potentates paid by the rich to protect their wealth. In Hartshorne property values were being upheld by the violent suppression of human values. Jesus, who did not accept the standards of the respectable and who did not fit, would not ask the strikers not to hate. They were right to hate with all their souls the thing for which the mine-owners stood, just as Jesus hated the thing for which the moneychangers stood. They were right to use their united strength to fight this thing without mercy until it should be destroyed.

God would not blame them morally or ethically if they resorted to violence in defense against the owners' violence. But he would blame them strategically. "Fret not yourselves because of the evildoer, for he shall be cut off." They should not waste their forces on individual oppressors, but work to cut off their system. The people's instrument was the union; their weapon was the strike, and they must use it with faith and without fear.

As for the union leaders who had made the splitting settlement of the strike in other fields, he could easily understand the men's feelings about it; but they must remember that the union could never be any better than its members made it. If they believed their leaders had betrayed them, they must agitate without ceasing for democracy in the union and for new leaders who would truly represent them.

When he had finished speaking, the chairman said that there was just five dollars' worth of food left in the union store. It would not be a nickel's worth apiece if evenly divided. He asked what should be done.

A Negro proposed that the food should be given to those who could not possibly get by over the week-end. He asked such people to stand. Seven whites and four Negroes stood up. The rest sat quietly, staring at them with hungry, weary eyes.

Claude stayed ten days at Hartshorne, and finally the owners of two of the three open-shop mines gave in and recognized the union.

Driving back to Paris, he thought about the question of violence and about his conversation with Webb. He thought also of how long a way he had traveled since the time when he accepted the gospel of Gandhi, the idea of nonresistance, as the formula for social change.

"If men did not take part in war," he had told himself neatly then, "there would be no war." But of course there was a war going on, a class war between property and humanity, and the defenders of humanity had no choice but to take part in it by resisting, or else become slaves. Nor could the Churches play any effective part in advancing the Kingdom if they put on blinkers and pretended there was no war.

The propertied class found Jesus' command to turn the other cheek very useful in piously condemning any resistance from the workers. They conveniently forgot the scourging of the money-lenders, which exposed the command to turn the other cheek as a tactical suggestion by Jesus, not a permanent precept. Certainly there were situations where it was necessary for oppressed people to submit. The Jews under the heel of Rome in Jesus' time were in such a situation. Unorganized, with all the weapons against them, they could only submit or be exterminated. But Jesus wanted them to organize to resist evil, using against violence the most potent weapon, union. On this rock he would build his Church.

Webb and the Marxists feared that violence on both sides was inevitable. But the trouble with them was that they did not see the difference between real and fake Christianity; therefore they could not understand the rôle that the Church militant could play in reducing the violence of social change to a minimum. By preaching Christ uncompromisingly, by refusing to admit that artificial scarcity enforced by one class upon another could be compatible with the Christian ideal, the thing was possible. Despite the hold that money-power had over religion, there were forces in every Church that had committed themselves to such a prophetic message. Most of the people in the Churches were workers. The money powers only operated them by remote control. The Churches could become a buffer, a group serving not factional interests but God's: a group of guides trained to see things from the long perspective, to see the world entire and the endless chain of man's development; a group to lead the people into the Kingdom by teaching them to be true to the divine spirit in them. Prophetic religion, a militant Church: it was still the hope of humanity.

On the following Sunday Claude passionately denounced from his pulpit the Christianity that would stand by while such needless suffering as he had seen at Hartshorne was inflicted on the sons and daughters of God.

"There is a religion of Jesus and a religion about Jesus," he cried. "This town, which is the type of contemporary Christianity, is so far removed from the religion of Jesus or any conception thereof, that when a man endeavors to maintain the attitude of Christ towards those who need a physician, he is thought of as dangerous and even mad.

"The same thing has happened to Christianity that

happened to all other religions. It happened to Buddhism, which created an elaborate ceremonial in order to worship as a God the Buddha who directly said he was no god. Buddha would say: 'If this is Buddhism, I am no Buddhist.'

"Looking upon our fine buildings, our elaborate ceremonies, our dogmatic differences, our selfish neglect of service to our fellowmen, Christ would say: 'If this is Christianity, I am no Christian.'

"You will not find true Christianity in most churches, but you will find it in a miners' union hall. I have seen it and tested it in my contact with the rank and file of the United Mine Workers throughout the field. The union is the only thing potentially stronger than the satanic system of capitalism. It is the living expression of the brotherhood of man, of the humble poor people who are the elect of God."

He dreamed of how this true Christianity would root itself and grow strong in the land when the Labor Temple was completed. He vowed that the sacrifice the people were making to build the Temple should not be in vain.

From several locals the dollars which the men had assessed themselves began to come into the fund. More cement was bought and the foundations of the Temple were finally completed. Soon it would rise above the ground and the banner on the great wooden cross would begin to be fulfilled: "That they might have life, and have it more abundantly."

A few days before Christmas the union locals received letters from the District tsar in Oklahoma, informing them of an extra assessment that all members were ordered to pay, and adding:

What is needed in District No. 21 is more co-operation in carrying out the policies of the United Mine Workers, and

less attention paid to those who have fanatic ideas and less to some of the students who are parading this district from the Commonwealth College located at Mena, Arkansas. Their principles are not in step with the Trades Labor movement of this country. It is my duty to keep the United Mine Workers from legislating themselves into the hands of their enemies. Any further information required in this matter may be had by a personal interview. I am, yours truly.

On the same day Claude received a letter from the same official:

Dear Sir, I have received many communications from members of our organization throughout District No. 21 relative to the question of a labor paper that you are advocating, together with the question of a labor temple in Paris, and check-off for the same.

My reply to those men is that I will not give consent to a check-off for the same. Our International Constitution, Article 14, Section 25, prohibits donations to be made for other than legitimate purposes. I trust that you will discontinue your activities along this line for the best interests of the United Mine Workers of America.

This question and the program of the students at Commonwealth College is going to be met by the opposition of the International and the District organization. The United Mine Workers of America was organized by the subterranean toilers of this country, and our policies were laid down for us by the brainiest labor leaders of this age, and as president of this district, I am going to protect the interests of the members of our union.

The question has been raised from time to time regarding your rights as a member in the United Mine Workers of America. The question of membership is clearly defined by Section 7 of Article 9 of the International Constitution, which says, in part: "but no applicant shall be eligible for initiation until he has started to work at a mine under the jurisdiction

of the local union where application for membership is made."

Therefore, I shall have to decide that you are not eligible for membership in our union. Although we appreciate your efforts in behalf of the workers in the past, I could not give consent to which was in conflict with our constitution. So I request, reverend, that you withdraw your name from the roster of our organization and save the embarrassment to yourself and the local union. In our union, we have men of all political and religious faiths, and as president of this district, it is my duty to protect the rights of each member, under the laws of our union.

The dollars stopped coming into the Temple fund. Claude himself had nothing. The money from three insurance policies was gone. His salary from the church members was still unpaid. Joyce was about to have another baby. His lungs were bad and he had to go again to a sanatorium.

He now cashed in his last insurance policy, which was all he had left to protect the future security of his family.

After Christmas he learned that there were investigators in town, hired by anonymous patriots to discover by just what methods his roubles were being smuggled in from Moscow.

VIII

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.—PAUL

The strongest bond of human sympathy, outside of the family relation, should be one of uniting all working people, of all nations, and tongues, and kindreds.—ABRAHAM LINCOLN

HE HEARD it first from some of the men down on the square.

It was the time when conditions all over the country had hit bottom, and there was a group near the pool hall arguing about the new President, Roosevelt, and his National Recovery Administration. Cures for the crisis were coming on the market every week. The men were very gaunt from their privations, but now that they had their union again, something had wakened in them, and they were fierce and strident in their talk. They were trying to figure out whether any of the crisis cures spelled ham and eggs and shoes.

Bert Loudermilk, figuring there were good things and bad about NRA, told of an aunt of his who had it on the authority of a Christian Church pastor that the NRA sign, now sprouting up all over the country, was the Mark of the Beast foretold in Revelation: because he that didn't have the mark could neither be bought from nor sold to.

A digger in a broad-brimmed black hat screwed up his face in a queer grin and punched Claude playfully on his shoulder.

"I was talkin' 'bout you to Zack Peters, preacher," he said. "He says they found out where you're a Communist."

Claude went home and asked Joyce if she knew she had married one of those. She said she had suspected it for a long time and which of the children would he like her to roast for dinner?

Actually the story had floated back to her almost a month before, but she had not thought it important enough to mention. The fulfillment of Webb's prophecy had been quick, but she had expected it. She would not have minded at all being charged with getting Moscow gold if they had really gotten any. Any kind of gold would be welcome. With the third child due very soon, it was not easy to see how they would manage.

Claude was laughing about the whole business, but she knew how little he really had to laugh about. He had received minus \$5,000 in Moscow gold, and the dream of the Temple was shattered. He had cussed good and hard a few times, and that was about all she had heard of the business, except that now every time the names of certain union tsars came up that old glint came to his eye, suggesting he wanted to do a murder.

Dreams, he said, were cheap, and personal spites were a waste of everybody's time. There was work to be done. He had no time to do nothing, and hadn't had. Democracy must be fought for in the union. If the men did not get that, if they did not shake off the stranglehold that the top-down controllers had over them, then what they had endured during the strike would be in vain.

The rank and file of the miners had all shared the shattered dream, but more than ever they were with him. They were not interested in witch-hunting and name-calling. Anyone could tie any label he wanted on preacher Williams. A word was a word to them and a loaf of

bread was a loaf of bread. They wanted bread and justice, and any man, by whatever name, who honestly fought with them for those things was their man. Others might assume to themselves the title of leaders, but it would be to such a man they would turn for help when there were real things to be done.

J. D. Winters, a miner whom Claude knew but slightly, wrote to the preacher when he heard the rumors:

You know that the Traducer and Artful Actor has been with us in all Walks of Life, and any one who through the sun rays of truth exposes the Pretentious Pleadings of those who Proclaim to be adherents to the true Principles of Christian faith, morality and justice may expect to travel a trail strewn with thorns and thistles rather than roses, as the advancing Crusaders Light, Truth and Justice begin to obliterate Suspicion, Distrust, Greed and Selfish Interest. Had you disregarded this call to help us in our strike and confined your efforts to Purely Spiritual Work, withheld from them your counsel, advice and your Concept of the rights of these Proletarian Workers, in my judgment your chance would have been largely secure. In fact I rather think you would not be the possessor of Brilliantly Worded testimonials confirming your Virtues and Broad Knowledge of how to advance the Cause of a Higher Standard of Christian Civilization.

The miners were tickled by the sermon Claude preached a few Sundays later. He quoted Paul: "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." He said that Jesus' blood was red. The international workers' flag was red. All men, regardless of race, had red blood. It was the one common color of mankind, symbolic of solidarity and brotherhood. "Yes," he said, "I am red."

It was nearly half a year since the coalowners recognized the union as the diggers' bargaining agent, and still nothing had been done about the most serious ques-

tion of all; the question of compensation to the men for injury, sickness and death resulting from their work. Arkansas was one of the only four States, all of them in the South, that had no compensation laws of any kind. In place of such laws these States had Anti-Evolution Bills and the poll-tax. It was just one more way in which the slave heritage, the never-broken tradition of a double standard for black and white, had caused all progress to lag in the South. Not a month went by in the Paris coal-field when the black tunnels did not spew up and cast aside some piece of human wreckage: some man with women and children dependent on him who was crippled or permanently diseased by the only work he knew. Such men were abandoned by the profit machine because they could make nobody any more profits. They were condemned with their dependents to starvation, and the machine did not consider it owed them so much as a doctor's care for their broken bodies. In ten years, twenty men had been killed working in the Paris mine. The disabled and the widows brought suit against the coalowners without success. Mines were carefully plastered with mortgages, and the cries of the starving, cheated people were lost in a hubbub of legal crosstalk.

Having waited in vain for some action from the union leadership, the militant nucleus of miners took the thing up with Claude in his study at the manse, which for practical purposes they now looked on as union headquarters. They worked together studying the workers' compensation laws of the fortyfour States that had them. They aroused the interest of the newly-elected representative in the State Assembly, who helped them draft a bill and agreed to press for it.

The preacher was delegated to go on the men's behalf wherever it might be possible to put forward and press for the bill. He was able to show that every year

there were more industrial casualties in the United States than in the Battle of Gettysburg. Presenting the case before State and union officials in Little Rock, he convinced most of the former of the need for the bill, but from the latter got indifference and opposition.

It was a shock even to him, knowing what he already did about labor tsars' betrayal of their own people, to find on investigation that officials of the State Federation of Labor had been actively fighting workers' compensation laws for many years. He returned to Paris wondering whether there could be any more damning indictment of the existing social system than its power over some of labor's own leaders, who fattened on union dues collected from men averaging \$250 a year income and then betrayed them to their masters.

He was eating his dinner the day after he came home, when a long distance phone call came. It was a United Mine Workers official drawing \$5,000 a year from the union, who had spoken from Claude's pulpit during the strike.

"I understand, reverend," the official shouted, "that you are lobbying for labor legislation. Tend to your own business."

Claude said: "The cause of labor certainly falls in the province of a Christian minister's activities."

"Tend to your own business and keep your head out of labor."

"I don't know if I will or not."

"Williams, you are going to keep on until you have an experience you won't like. If you don't keep out, I'll come down there and make you."

Claude laughed and went back to his dinner. He could see how open his position was to false interpretation. For the mine-owners and their friends, accustomed to buying labor leaders for cash and privilege and sincerely unable to conceive of any motive force but personal profit, he

was a paid agent of Moscow. As one of their group had said: "You know that no man will do what Williams is doing without he's got something up his sleeve."

For the leader-betrayers of the union, who seemed to have gained their positions to fill their pockets and naturally judged others by themselves, he was an outsider trying to cut himself a piece of their pie. Many thoughtless people must be convinced that such interpretations were correct, for all the organs of propaganda were in the enemy's hands. And yet one of the cardinal points of his Christian faith was that if he was on the right road, men in high places would speak ill of him. The hatred and lies of his enemies could not touch him as long as he had the confidence and comradeship of the rank and file, the humble working people. He needed nothing more to know that he had not lost touch with God.

The outlook for American workers as the great depression slid into its fourth year was black. Over all the country the owners of property, struggling to save their paper wealth as air was let out of the balloon, were driven to violence to slash wages. Since 1929 the national payroll of wage-workers had dropped from $17\frac{1}{4}$ to $6\frac{3}{4}$ billions, and farmers' incomes had been more than cut in half, while the income of the owning class, dropping less than the cost of living, was actually increased. The new Government strove desperately to stop the landslide, to start the wheels of production turning again and put spending power back in the people's pockets. The temper of the wage-earners and of the swelling army of unemployed was ugly. It was becoming impossible to conceal from them any longer that the country had abounding wealth in it for all, that their misery was only necessary in order to maintain an out-of-date system of economy.

The owner class did not like what the new Government was doing. But Claude was able to write qualified

praise of the Government in the Paris papers, because it was a Democratic Government, and the Democratic Party was the party of the South, the party that had historically kept the Negroes in their place and the embers of feudalism glowing. Yet he could see danger signals along the line of the Government's policy. From abroad came news of countries where the owning class had been able to retain the system only by abolishing the democratic forms with which the people might have seized power. There was talk everywhere of capital and labor working together in a disciplined way to solve their common problems: dangerous and delusive talk as Claude saw it, because, as European fascism had shown in practice, they really had no common problems and could only work together with labor wearing the harness and blinkers and capital astride the golden saddle. The story of fascism was not new to Southerners with their eyes open. Before the lights had begun to dim and the word *fascism* was coined in Europe, the South had already had the features of it.

There were forces loose in the world seeking to drive mankind backward into the darkness out of which, through all the centuries, it had been struggling. Such tendencies could not be overlooked in the NRA, which had established arbitration boards over the country to draw up Codes under which each industry must operate, and to settle disputes between capital and labor. Both sides were to be represented on the boards, but a realist might see it this way: if the labor representatives truly represented labor, a board would not be able to agree; and if they did not truly represent labor, it would be no different from the Fascist corporations in Italy.

The miners of Arkansas and Oklahoma found themselves represented on an NRA board in Fort Smith by the appointed president of UMW District 21. It did not

therefore surprise the miners when cases they brought up before the board were settled in behalf of the owners. The effect of this began to show itself in a regrowth of cynicism and listlessness among the weaker union brothers. Seeing only the abuse of the union idea, they began to turn against the idea itself.

Claude believed the rôle of religion had never been so vital as at this time of bewilderment piled on suffering. The people must have leadership that they could trust, and they could find it nowhere else. The people must have faith and hope.

The whole character of his church had changed since he came there. It was filled with miners, farm laborers, sharecroppers, young people, poor old folks, and other subversive elements. Some of the original membership had stopped coming; others still came because they were biological Presbyterians and there was no other church in Paris officially wedded to the true faith. The elders, led by the retired colonel, valiantly carried the torch for the old God in adult Sunday School classes, the only field which they still dominated. They did not know what to do, because the Presbyterian General Assembly seemed to be on the preacher's side. At its latest convention at Denver it had adopted a program of sixteen ideals and objectives, ten of which were concerned with secular matters of democracy and the rights of labor. The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. was dedicated to

subordination of profit to the creative and co-operative spirit;

a living wage as an irreducible minimum together with a just participation by the worker in the profits of the industry in which he is engaged;

the safeguarding of working people from harmful conditions of labor, dangerous machinery and occupational disease;

the assumption by industry of the burdens entailed by industrial accidents, disease, unemployment and death;

reduction of hours of labor as the productivity of industry increases;

the right of employees and employers alike to organize for collective bargaining and social action;

the erection of a co-operative world-order;

recognition and maintenance of the rights of free speech, free assembly, and a free press and encouragement of unfettered interchange of mind with mind, as essential to the continuing discovery of truth and the dissemination of knowledge;

the inviolability of agreements both in letter and in spirit; mutual goodwill and racial, economic and religious co-operation.

It was for these basic rights of the people that Claude cried out in his sermons, Sunday after Sunday. They were rights guaranteed by the Constitution, and he was only asking that the Constitution be respected. But custom was more potent than any Constitution, and to the owners of property he was a wild man calling for the end of all order and the washing of the streets in blood.

After his sermon in which he admitted being as red as the blood of Jesus, the landowning lady who was an elder on the church board came to him and said in a trembling voice:

"You ought to know nothing about all this. You ought to preach Jesus and him crucified."

She liked Claude, so she had often told him. He reminded her of her son. She was as liberal as anyone ought to be and she admired his interest in the poor. Also she had the great love any Christian should have for the Negroes in their place. She was against spoiling them because it was bad for them. She agreed it was a pity that ten times as much was spent on educating a white child in

Arkansas as on a Negro child, but after all it was the whites' money, for the Negroes paid almost no taxes. Her argument went in a circle which she never followed all the way: the Negroes were backward, therefore they were poor, therefore they paid no taxes, therefore they could not expect much education, therefore they were backward. The first time she had heard Claude speak in a sermon of the Negro problem she had said to him after service:

"But there is no problem. Not for real Southern folk who love them. Why, when I was staying up North last year I got so lonesome for nigras that I got one in to do my washing."

But she was troubled by the way Claude seemed to be going as his references to Negroes became more and more extreme. His inclusion in the services of a Prayer for the Sin of Lynching seemed to her an unnecessary insult to decent white folks. She was not in favor of lynch law save perhaps in extreme cases, and she resented the implication of general guilt in the opening word: "O God, how dare we lift our eyes to thee? For we are guilty as a nation of tolerating the practice of vile mob murder of men." Another insult to whites, she thought, was that part of the Labor Temple program that concerned Negroes. It had been planned that, on two days in each week, the recreation facilities used by whites on the other five days were to be turned over for Negroes' exclusive use; and even suggested that later mixed games might be arranged and Negroes should be represented on the church board.

Then one Sunday Claude preached a whole sermon about the "rights" and "achievements" of the colored people. He said that whites were but a quarter of the world's population and only ruled the other races by force; that preachers who told the people race-feeling was

natural were liars, because such feeling had never existed before the time of the French Revolution; that the solution was a single race, which was all Jesus recognized and all science recognized. He ended by saying:

"What is good for the white man is good for the Negro, namely liberty and democracy."

It was almost as good as an incitement to the nigrabs to rise up and rape all the white women as they did after the Civil War, and it did not seem possible to the lady that she could have heard such words from a Southern-born man. She was very grieved and saw Claude's soul in jeopardy. Afterwards she said to him:

"I believe you are really a good Christian man. I want, I try to believe it. You are misguided, that is all. I pray for you every day, that God will turn your steps back into the light."

It seemed to her that such notions could only come out of a person morally diseased, and yet as far as Claude's personal morality was concerned, she could find no serious fault in him. He was apparently a good, sober family man, even if he did sometimes drink a glass of beer and use cuss words with those miners. It worried her greatly, but one day she happened to go into the recreation-room of the church and she saw something.

There were the usual magazines lying on the table: the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, *Thinker*, *Forum*, *World Tomorrow*. She had never read any of them because living the Christian life left her no time over for idling with magazines, but they looked respectable enough. She glanced over the table, and from under one of the magazines she saw a bare leg and foot protruding. She pulled it out and found herself confronted with a photograph of a young woman completely nude, revealing all her shame except what was sparsely hidden by an intervening tree-branch. It was a magazine concerned with a move-

ment called nudism, about which she had read something in the newspapers. Fluttering the pages she found it to be full of even more shameful pictures, without benefit of branches. She thought her eyes must be deceiving her.

If the preacher not only bought such things, but placed them in the church to fill young souls with corruption right under the eyes of God, then her worst suspicions about him were confirmed. When she had composed herself a little, she told the clerk of session about what she had seen. The clerk of session said he would look into the matter at once.

The lady had given Claude so many lectures after the Sunday services on true religion, and seemed so well posted on the subject, that Claude went down to her plantation one day to see how she practised it. She had inherited twelve hundred acres down by the river, and many Negro families lived there, raising cotton for her on her land.

He went about visiting with the Negroes. It was much like any average plantation in the South. The Negroes lived in unpainted cabins with newspapers pasted over the cracks in the decayed walls, without the convenience of an outhouse, with malarial mosquitoes buzzing through the paneless windows. The women had babies without any doctor, and many of the children who survived birth were dying slowly from flux caused by inadequate food.

A seventy-year-old mulatto known as Uncle Mage said he had been sharecropping there for eighteen years and had produced as much as sixty bales of cotton in a single year. He had received slightly less than \$700 for the eighteen years' work by himself and all his family. One winter he had decided to go to Oklahoma, where there seemed a chance to better himself. He had offered a

banker in Paris as reference to his prospective new landlord in Oklahoma. But the banker had declined to give the reference, patting Uncle Mage on the shoulder and saying with a genial smile:

"You're too good a man to lose."

In the fall, to get money for a pair of shoes, Uncle Mage had gone to gleaning remnants of cotton in the field after the regular crop was picked. He had been arrested, found guilty of stealing, and pardoned on condition he did not leave the plantation.

In Claude's language this was peonage, and next Sunday he preached a sermon on the Lord's Prayer with implications that lifted the plantation lady clear out of her seat.

He said: What did Jesus pray for? For the coming of God's Kingdom on earth, meaning a human society based on love and equality. The first thing Jesus asked to bring this about was bread. After that he asked for all-round forgiveness of past trespasses—for the past to be wiped out. Then he asked that men should not be led into temptation to steal and kill. And what was it that led men into temptation? Hunger and want. If the poor were not cheated of the products of their labor, they would not be tempted.

The preacher went from there into the matter of some person unknown who had stolen the nudist magazine from the church reading-room. He said he did not like to think what kind of want it was that made the thief, whoever it might be, steal this magazine. It was not the action of a clean-minded person. A hungry man who stole for bread was virtuous by comparison.

He said he had heard some of the outcry that certain members of the congregation had raised about the magazine. Such an attitude showed only how far many professing Christians were from God, for they blas-

phemed against God's most beautiful work, the human body. Not to see God in the beauty of the human body was to be unfit for membership in God's family. As for himself, he saw the nudist movement as a sincere revolt against the moral hypocrisy found in most churches. He had put the magazine in the reading-room temporarily because he thought the implications of the movement worthy of discussion, whether people agreed with it or not. He compared the movement with the enforced nudism seen all over the South, imposed by a more vicious sin. There were thousands of actually nude children in the bottoms, and nobody ever protested about that.

After the service one of the elders came and spoke to Claude with a chastened look on his face. He said humbly that it was he who had taken the magazine. The plantation lady had told the clerk of session about it, and the clerk of session had told him. He had not meant to steal, merely to investigate. He would return the magazine at once.

In February the condition in Arkansas was so bad that the Governor decided to appoint a special Commission to investigate the state of the people and report on possible ways of dealing with it.

The authorities were in a mood bordering on panic. Fearing an uprising of the people, they were compelled to take this unprecedented step.

There was no clamor to be among the three appointees on the Commission. The job would be an unpleasant one, involving the necessity of staring terrible and shameful facts in the face. It would carry with it no pay and little political prestige.

John Williams, Paris' new county representative in the State Assembly, who was impressed by Claude's unselfish interest in his poorest fellow creatures during the agita-

tion for miners' compensation laws, recommended him for the Commission. With the official mandate in his pocket Claude went about widely among the lowest strata of depression victims, the unemployed and the farm workers. He turned up stones and raked over garbage heaps, determined to get a great deal more information than the Governor expected. It strengthened him greatly to feel that his Church was backing him. Dr. Gillespie wrote from Little Rock:

You need have no worry about the support of the Board of National Missions for sane, aggressive application of the Gospel to social conditions. I will come to you at any time and if necessary I will take the presbyterial committee with me. Command me if you need me.

Even Claude had never realized until now to what depths of want the profit system could plunge those whom it disinherited. It was like a terrible mechanical giant who stayed far away off in his countinghouse, lest his heart, if he had one, should be touched by the great cry of despair and frustration that went up from his slaves. No wonder that so many of the people fatalistically accepted supernatural explanations of their fate. The giant, real as he was, was not tangible and physical, but a system; his strange name was finance capital, and the people knew only landlord and tenant, boss and worker, God and Devil. The sharecroppers' immediate landlords were themselves in danger of being caught between the giant millstone and the toilers for whose life-blood it thirsted. Unable to pay their taxes ever since the bottom dropped out of the market for farm products, the landlords had only been saved from losing their privileges altogether by a political conjuring-trick; the danger that they might have to work for a living had been averted when the planter-administration in Little Rock

accepted one year's taxes in full payment of the defaulted years. The writing-off of their tax debt merely meant that the already meager school program of the State had to be still further curtailed. But in such times the Negroes and poor-whites were better off anyhow without schools, which seasonally distracted children from their work in the fields and put ideas into their heads. Thus the planter-landlords clung on as best they could; but few of them really owned the land any more. They had become stewards for the giant who was never seen. Most of what the giant did not own by title-deed he owned by mortgage through his bank tentacles. There was the great South, abounding in wealth: in coal, oil, timber, fish and game, marble, iron, phosphates, water power, sulphur and fertile land. But the South no longer owned it. Nor did the South control what should be done with the wealth of fertile land. It had to be cotton, cotton, cotton, year in and year out, because cotton was the least perishable crop most easily turned into cash. Every year the cotton crop drained more life out of the soil of the South, because the giant decreed it.

All along the Arkansas River bottomlands, down to the Mississippi and through the great rich delta to the Gulf, the wretchedness of the giant's farm victims cried out to God. There were multitudes of new victims each year: small farming families who had owned a piece of land, had been forced to borrow on it when the crisis dragged prices down, and then because they could not meet the debt had been robbed of it. From farmers of their own land they became renters, still using their own equipment. Their crops were worth almost nothing, and the giant, robbing them of mule and plow and all they owned, pushed them down a step farther to make them sharecroppers. They raised a landlord's crop with a landlord's implements, putting the whole family to

work, and lived in the landlord's shack until it pleased him to put them out and make them dependent on casual day labor. So the great multitude of sharecroppers and day-laborers, without land or possessions of rights, increased million by million.

To people on this level of existence security had always been an unknown word. They lived and died in an abyss. They had nothing of their own, nothing in which to take pride, nothing to hope for. They knew the landlord cheated them on the prices he charged at his store, and cheated them again at settling-time, but few understood how he did it or why, in order to maintain his privilege of having others work for him, he had to do it. Of the huge fraud that was being committed against them by the faraway finance monopolies they were ignorant. They had toiled unremittingly since childhood and were almost illiterate. The landlord showed them his ledgers if they insisted, but to protest or question was to face eviction. They had no recourse to law because the poll-tax deprived them of the vote, and the landlords therefore owned courts and legislature. If they dared stand up for their rights, the landlords and their hirelings pinned deputy-sheriff badges on themselves and suppressed them by violence. For poor-whites and for Negroes it was the same, though still the Negroes had the very bitterest dregs of the cup, being oppressed not only because they were poor, but also because they were black. To vote cost a poor-white a dollar he did not possess, and to protest the landlord's faked accounts might cost him eviction and a beating. To do either might cost a Negro his life.

Claude spoke to groups of croppers, white and Negro, as he went about. His mandate was to investigate a condition and for him this meant setting to work to improve it. He explained planter arithmetic to the people

and said the best description he knew of a sharecropper was a man who farmed for exercise. If he was a bad worker by the landlord's standard he was thrown off the land. If he was a good worker he always came out just a little in debt at settling time, so that he could not leave the plantation. No matter how hard he worked, it was almost impossible for him to see the color of real money.

The croppers had not heard such talk before from any respectable white preacher. He presented to them a picture of their condition which they could recognize. He said that Negroes and poor-whites were all in the same waterlogged boat, and they could only bale it out and put it in sailing shape by working together. Every act of race prejudice was a blow struck for their masters, but if they were Christians they could not have room for such prejudice. The Negroes had an enemy, but it was not the white race, even though whites lynched them. The poor-whites had an enemy, but it was not the Negroes, even though Negroes competed with them for jobs. Negroes did not want to live as degraded serfs any more than whites did, as they had shown by their continual revolts from the earliest days of slavery. Both Negroes and whites had a common enemy, the landlords, who falsely claimed of God a right God never gave them: the right to live on others' toil. It was the landlords who made them poor and then, to hide their own guilt, set one race against the other in artificial hatred.

But there would be no race hatred, the preacher said, if there were no poverty. In 1930 there had been twice as many lynchings as in 1929: the connection between lynching and economics was clear. And now the terror was showing itself in new and more horrible forms. Taking advantage of the hatred and at the same time adding fuel to it, white criminals were blacking their faces when they went forth to rob, murder and rape. It was

all part of the same conspiracy against the poor and landless.

As for himself, the preacher told them, he was no worker of miracles, but only a son of the working class and a preacher of God, which meant a preacher of union. He was ready to help them in any way he could, but they must be ready to help themselves. They must organize themselves, and if they waited for the great chiefs of the labor movement to come along and do it for them they would have a long wait. The great white chiefs of labor had incomes as big as the President's and were interested in organizing people who received cash for their work.

It was a slow business making many of the poor-white sharecroppers see the thing this way. As if it were the last rag of pride left to them, they clung to the idea of their superiority to the Negroes. Even when they had once begun to see how this was really a trap into which they had let themselves be led, it was hard to make them act upon the idea of racial co-operation.

With the Negroes it was a little easier. They had been lynched, oppressed and humiliated by the whites for generations. They instinctively distrusted any member of the white race. But they had little false pride, little illusion that there was any farther for them to fall whatever happened. And running through the whole development of the Negroes since first they were stolen from their native soil was a revolutionary tradition. In the lifetimes of Claude's hearers it had emerged in the revolt of colored infantry at Brownsville in 1911; in the attempt to form a Negro farmers' protective union at Elaine in 1919 when whites massacred them by hundreds; in a small and spontaneous croppers' strike at New Castle in 1927; in the bread riots at England in 1932, and in other demonstrations of their refusal to starve unprotestingly.

They were astonished by Claude's message, and many were doubtful, but the more bold among them felt faith in this preacher and said they would come in and work with him. They saw in the plan of organizing blacks and whites together their only chance, and it was possible for them to visit the white preacher's house without arousing much suspicion. They began coming from miles around to the Paris manse, and Claude taught them the simple facts and strategy of the battle into which they were going. Using the Children of Israel's fight for freedom as illustration, and the Old Testament prophets' rebukings of the rich as slogans, he showed them the topography of the land and the strength and weakness of both forces. The Negroes of the feudal bottomlands grasped what they heard with a sure instinct, and Claude brought out in them what had so long been suppressed, their faith in themselves. He taught some of them to read and write, and built up mutual respect between himself and them. They liked him because he took their tragedy so seriously in his heart that they could laugh with him in a way they were not accustomed to laughing with white folks.

IX

And the whole assembly rose up and brought him to Pilate, and began to accuse him: We have found this man, they said, an agitator among our nation, forbidding payment of tribute to Caesar. . . . Then Pilate said to the high priests and to the crowd, I can find no crime in this man. But they violently insisted: He stirreth up the people, they said, throughout all Judaea with his teaching.—LUKE

Jesus was the supreme revolutionary. In preaching the Kingdom of Heaven, he attacked imperialism and capitalism, propagated and practised communism, and exhorted all men to love one another, even their enemies.—SUN YAT-SEN

Now the Paris manse was buzzing like a hive of bees. The colored people came there increasingly for all kinds of help and advice. They came right in off the public highway through the front door. The preacher was seen from the sidewalks sitting down at table with Negroes. On the square he shook hands with them in full view of the white people, and called them Mr, Mrs or Miss instead of using their first names, unless he knew them well. There were now rumors around town that the preacher was really a foreign Yankee; a man who acted so could not have been born in Tennessee.

He had taken on a program of work which had grown so big that he could hardly cope with it. A full night of rest and a quietly enjoyed meal were things dimly remembered. He lost weight continually, and his eyes were giving him pain.

Workers' groups all through the district used his study as their headquarters and included him in delegations

and conferences. He was helping the unemployed to organize, writing resolutions, making surveys, heading petitions, mapping union strategy, preparing new sermons on radical Bible texts. In Russellville, Midland, Fort Smith and a circuit of other towns he set up Christian Service groups and managed to attend each once a week to conduct lectures, forums or services.

Out of talks with a college man, a Marxist, who had come down into the hills from the East to write and study, he developed an adult education program which he called the Philosophers' Club. The club met twice a month, in the manse or out in the country during summer, to discuss the rights and wrongs of socialism, communism, fascism, anarchism, and questions of the new social approach to sex and marriage. All systems of economy were anatomized on the basis that the world had never had democracy, with the aim of discovering under which system it was attainable, and, if it were attainable, whether it was desirable. The club's motto was "Truth though heaven falls," because, as Claude wrote in the *Paris Express*, which the miners called the *Excuse*, if heaven fell because of truth, then heaven was false.

The preacher of Paris was being written about now as far away as New York, and people in the progressive movements began to come often through the town, staying a night or two at the manse. The manse was known locally as the "Red Hotel." It had become a stopping-off place for Socialist Party officials on their trips South. Commonwealth College students and faculty members were liable to drop in almost any time. Ward Rodgers, the young Methodist preacher who had studied with Claude at Nashville, came on a visit, and found Claude so hard-pressed that he stayed a year, working with him and with miners and unemployed. He spoke from the

Presbyterian pulpit, and Claude introduced him to the congregation as a man they could be sure was all right, for he had been in jail and had been thrown out of several churches. This sally reached the ears of Dr. Hefner in Fort Smith, who commented: "That does not necessarily commend the young man to me."

For the new socially militant groups that the crisis was forging out of many of the Churches, as well as for older Church organizations committed to realistic Christianity, Paris was one of the places marked large in red on the map. Claude was now in communication with the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, an organization uniting all the Churches on broad Christian issues. The Methodist Federation for Social Service sent Winifred Chappell to Paris, to study Claude's work and program. From the newly-formed Religion and Labor Foundation came its most ardent spirit, Willard Uphaus, whose account of the Foundation's activities and plans fired Claude with more enthusiasm than anything he had heard. It was a group embracing all religions in the widest sense for the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God. It aimed specifically to do what Claude wanted to do; to bring religion into the class struggle so that a system of economic justice might be attained without general violence. The Foundation had been formed by six eminent men of religion, including Jerome Davis of Yale Divinity School, Bishop McConnell of the Methodists, and Rabbi Stephen S. Wise. After Uphaus' first visit Claude's work became a Southern field program of the Foundation. The affiliation gave Claude and Joyce a vitalizing consciousness of being participants in the nationwide and worldwide movement for human rights.

While all this work went on, the manse door was ever open to the young people of the community, who

brought their individual problems, knowing that these would be given frank study and there would be no moralistic preaching. The young people loved Claude as it is seldom any man's lot to be loved. He never held their weaknesses against them. It was perhaps a weakness in him that he had too much faith in people, and consequently asked for painful disillusionment from time to time. But none of the young people in his group ever let him down in the long run. A boy who had been almost given up for lost by his parents, and who started out by forging Claude's name to a check, became one of the most advanced and dependable members of the group and repaid the preacher with burning, almost embarrassing loyalty.

In such a community many problems arose from the old taboos coming in conflict with youth's new aspiration for full, vigorous self-expression. Once the son of a leading citizen of Paris, who had opposed Claude in many things, came with such a problem. He brought with him a girl whom he had made pregnant. They were fine young people and loved each other. Claude saw the shadow of social taboo hanging over three lives. He knew the economic origin of such taboos and of the law that upheld them, and it had nothing to do with Christianity as he understood it. The Christian way for him was clear, since Christianity meant putting human rights first. He married the pair and set the date on the certificate back so that they could have their baby without fear. He told them that when the commandment about adultery was given, it was impossible for a man and woman to have relations without involving society, because it was before the time of scientific birth-control. But now that it was possible to avoid involving society, the act was neither moral nor immoral, but unmoral. The marriage of the young people was a successful one.

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Passing one day the house of the retired colonel on the church board, Claude and Joyce found men at work putting final touches to a job of redecorating.

They stopped in their tracks, blinking at the brilliant and bizarre colorscheme. The roof of the house was painted red, the body of the house white, and the trim baby-blue.

"Maybe," said Joyce, "he figures that the magic combination of red, white and blue will help ward off the evil spirit of a certain Commune-ist preacher in this town."

It was not necessarily a fanciful notion. The storm of which Claude was the center was full of menace. He had stirred up the people, and if a meager relief program in Paris had not staved it off at the eleventh hour, there would already have been trouble.

All day long now, haggard men and women stood in line outside the relief commissary on the courthouse square, waiting to be fed by the Government. The crisis had reached a point where the owning class had only spells and omens to give them hope. Each week the two editors tried to wish back good times by incantations in their papers, not daring to face the realities behind the crisis. But times became worse and the hatred of such militant realism as the preacher's became more bitter.

Since he had been working more intensively among the Negroes, the opposition had taken the same form it had taken in the Auburntown parish, only the nigger-lover accusations were more specific. Rumor had it among the best people that the preacher had already picked out the black boys for his three small daughters to marry.

At the same time the opposition from the UMWA leaders was intensifying, for Claude was openly working with the rank-and-file vanguard for the autonomy of District 21. The miners saw their situation quite simply.

The union belonged to them, and they would never cease struggling for leaders of their own choice until all hell froze over thirteen inches deep on Good Friday.

Throughout the land autonomy movements were spontaneously forming in the United Mine Workers. Around Pittsburgh the struggle had already been going on for two years. In every coalfield of District 21 there was an autonomy group. Their program demanded removal of all self-appointed leaders, dues-payment direct to the locals instead of the check-off system, opposition to all fascist tendencies in NRA, equal rights for Negroes to work in any mine, abolition of the North-South wage differential, and union membership for unemployed as well as employed miners. With the leaders of the group in Paris Claude was busy calling conventions, raising demands, making overtures by letter, wire and delegation to local and national NRA boards and to the UMWA International leadership.

Since all the overtures were ignored, a conference was called at Fort Smith, and the District tsar was asked to come and hear the men's case. He did not come, but wrote to the autonomy committee:

Referring to your statement that it would be better for me to attend these meetings and make explanations, permit me to say that I am not accepting any advice from your committee. Such tactics as have been employed by those who have only one object in view—that is, to gain office by the destruction of this District—have placed additional barriers in the road to autonomy.

Let me further advise you that you will have to prove your ability to conduct the affairs of the District, as well as finance it, because the International Union is not going to place additional burdens on the backs of organized Districts, just for the purpose of putting untested inexperienced and non-unionized men at the head.

Therefore my position stands absolutely upon the program adopted by the policy committee in this District. I shall demand an apology from the leaders of this dual movement to this office. Unless that is done, action will be taken in accordance with the International constitution. The time has come for a show-down in District 21. From now on the laws of the International will be strictly enforced.

It was only what Claude expected, but it dispelled among many of the less enlightened miners the last doubt as to whose interests this type of union official was advancing.

In such a situation the National Industrial Recovery Act gave the men the right to hold an election. They did so, and out of a 7,000 poll 6,000 voted for the autonomy program and for new District officials. The election was ignored both by mine-owners and by the District leadership. The NRA board rejected it. Summoned to a hearing at Fort Smith, where the miners' rank-and-file were denied representation, the newly-elected officials were expelled from the union for trying to start a dual movement, although they could point to the specific statement in their program that they were for unity and against any dual movement. The District tsar decreed that the locals' share of dues money would be withheld altogether until the autonomy movement ceased and the Paris preacher was ejected from their councils.

Claude was surrounded by powerful enemies, and he could feel his position as a minister growing daily more precarious. The whispers that he was a communist, a nigger-lover and a free-love advocate had become shouts.

He had brought a dead church to life, filled it with people, made it a great and active force in the community and the whole region. He had tried to do what he set out to do, what the church board agreed for him to do—to make the Presbyterian church of Paris a place where the

principles of Christ were applied to the fundamental problems of society. He had done it uncompromisingly and without soft soap for anyone.

That was apparently his trouble. He took Christianity seriously, too seriously to leave time and brain-energy over for being a politician. In some ways he was a simple man, for he took others at their word and expected them to take him at his. How could he ever have imagined that the church board understood the same thing by Christianity as he did? Their Christianity was firmly flanked by quotation marks: based on certain texts which, taken out of their immediate and historical context, were comfortable to the owners of property. They were accustomed to words being used loosely, symbolically and without practical application. Nothing he had said or done had changed them one iota. They were openly opposed to his whole program, and for them the splitting of the church into two factions was the only thing he had achieved.

His belief that the key to the riddle of human misery, of poverty in the midst of plenty, could be found in Jesus and the prophets was unshaken. But he was less sure than he had once been that the Kingdom could be attained through the existing Churches. Sometimes he wondered whether anything could save the Churches from the complaisant supernaturalism to which they clung. Several of them, his own included, had theoretically committed themselves to prophetic religion, but when the test came there was always a powerful group demanding caution, meekness, compromise. The news from Dr. Gillespie was discouraging. He wrote to say that the Board of Missions budget was being slashed owing to hard times, and he doubted if he would be retained another year as executive for the Little Rock area.

Claude's own church in Paris, the whole U.S.A. Presbyterian Church, the Methodists, Baptists, Catholics, Jews—all, it seemed, were split up the middle by the mighty economic forces laid bare by the crisis. They could not play the part they ought to play because the cleavage of the class struggle, instead of stopping at the frontiers of the Church, cut right across them. Extraordinary upheavals were taking place everywhere. Fred Shorter in Seattle, Hahn in Buffalo, Paul Cotton in eastern Pennsylvania had cut loose from all Church institutions and established workers' class-struggle churches. Left-wing Congregationalists were breaking down respectable churchly precedents in their Council for Social Action, Methodists in their Federation for Social Service, Episcopalians in their Church League for Industrial Democracy, Presbyterians in their Fellowship for Social Action. The once-respectable snowy-haired Bishop Brown of Little Rock, who had scandalized the devout by his one-man revolt against Churchly pharisaism, was publishing as fast as he could write them books and pamphlets endorsing communism as the real Christian leadership of the period of capitalist decay. From Maryland it was reported that, in the middle of the Easter service, the pastor of the little Methodist Episcopal church at Landsdowne had hurled his Bible across the floor from his pulpit, crying:

"If the study of this book is going to hide the real Jesus from me, there goes my Bible! The Bible is not the word of God. It is men's interpretation of the word of God, and anything reduced to words is imperfect, for language itself is imperfect. I love the truths that have come out of it and entered my heart and life. But as I look about me and see the institution we call the Church and the book we call the Bible used to restrict man's growth mentally, morally and spiritually, to create in

him a prejudice against any new revelation of truth, I feel like saying with all my heart, as I believe Jesus would say: Cursed be the Church and cursed be the Bible when used to enslave man created in the image of God!"

Such reports kept alive Claude's hope that the Churches could yet be saved for Christ, but for his own position the outlook was not bright. For many months he had received only that half of his salary which the Board of Missions had undertaken to pay, and now the Board of Missions and his most dependable champion, Dr. Gillespie, were feeling the draft. So when he heard of a possible opening with the Emergency Relief Administration, he decided to offer himself for it, though he knew that with all his enemies his chance was slight. He wrote to Dr. Gillespie saying he proposed to do this to try to widen his scope and provide some security for his family, and Dr. Gillespie replied:

I feel that you should by all means do it. If ever a man fought for his ideals and sacrificed everything for them anywhere you have done it in Paris. No church is worthy of a minister whom it will do nothing to support.

Yet the people needed Claude's church as they had never needed anything. It represented all their hopes for a better life. They still hoped for the completion of the Labor Temple of which they had laid the foundations, but no work had been done on it for a year, owing to lack of funds and the board's growing antagonism. The people had to make do with the old building. Those who had pledged free labor on the new Temple gave it to remodeling the old church. There was \$400 worth of renovation to be done, and Claude managed to get the board to contribute twenty dollars. When the work was done, the church at least looked fitting.

The men who did this work were not church mem-

bers. Claude had not opened the doors for new members because he always felt he would not like to ask decent miners and farmers to be governed by such a board. But one day at noontime a young miner with whom Claude was shooting pool said:

"I'm a church member. Did you know? Been one two years."

"Thought you were a good old heathen," said Claude. "Which church is yours?"

"Christian church out there in the country."

The miner said nothing for a minute and then:

"I may be a member of this church sometime."

Claude made no comment, but he took what had been said as a cue. The next Sunday he announced that the doors of the church were open for new members. Eleven people presented themselves for membership after service. Seven more came in the following Sunday. Soon the church had over sixty new members.

The new members had a quick look around and started deciding what they wanted changed. The basis of the Presbyterian Church was democratic government. There were now more workers than business men in the membership, but on the board the workers had no representation.

Claude called a congregational meeting. The church was filled with new members, and the elders and deacons shifted a little uneasily in their seats. Fred Howell, who had just joined up, rose and said:

"We ought to expand the board."

"You can't do that," said an elder. "If you add to it, it'll be too hard to get a quorum."

"That's just the trouble now," said Woodrow Petty, one of Claude's young people who had now become a preacher himself. "It's too darned easy to get a quorum."

After the meeting the elders, shaken by the sudden

challenge, told Claude to modify his course. They saw it as a conspiracy against them by the preacher. Claude said it was none of his doing. He could not modify his course because he had no course to modify, except that he hoped to see the democratic principle of the Church carried out.

At the next congregational meeting the elders offered as a concession to elect four deacons from the new membership. But the new members were not interested in deacons. They were the majority in the church and they wanted the voice in the control to which this entitled them.

They voted to increase the board by seven elders, and proceeded to nominate candidates. To the elders' mortification, they had come armed with the appropriate information on Presbyterian law. At this point an elder made a motion to adjourn and was voted down 57 to 8. The seven nominees were elected. Claude offered a benediction and dismissed the meeting.

As the jubilant new members moved out of the church the clerk of session gathered up his papers with trembling hands. He looked stormily at Claude and said:

"Now we're blowned up. You got these cantankerous miners in the church. Blatherskites!"

Claude murmured that he had never heard anyone objecting to the blatherskites putting their nickels in the plate and doing free repair work on the building.

He was busy during the next week or two making preparations for a forum on social problems which he planned for the following month in Paris, to be participated in by labor and religious leaders from near and far. He tried several times to get the board to meet, in order that the new elders might be ordained. Finally he discovered what had been occupying all the board's time.

They had been circulating among the old church members a petition to this effect.

We, members of the congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Paris, earnestly desiring to promote the peace and progress of the Kingdom of Christ through our beloved Church, after months of careful study, have concluded that for the best interests of the church and the cause which it represents, the pastoral relationship between the church and the Rev. C. C. Williams should be dissolved:

Therefore we the undersigned respectfully request that the Presbytery of Fort Smith be called to meet in Paris at an early date to study the conditions and, if it seems wise to the Presbytery, to dissolve the existing pastoral relationship between the Rev. C. C. Williams and the Presbyterian Church in Paris.

The petition had been signed by eleven church members and two others, and had been sent to the Fort Smith Presbytery with this manifesto:

Comes the Board of Elders of the Paris Presbyterian Church and for its charges against C. C. Williams states:

(a) That the said C. C. Williams has been and is now derelict in his duties toward the church;

(b) That he has constantly espoused the cause of Communism, which is contrary to the teaching of the Church and the laws of the Government and land in and under which we live;

(c) That he preaches a doctrinal view and belief which is at variance with the recognized tenets of this Church.

A month after the congregational meeting at which the new members had chosen their representatives, a group of eight ministers from other parishes met in Paris on behalf of the Fort Smith Presbytery. The ministers came straight to the church without stopping to speak to any of the people of Paris. The meeting was convened in the early afternoon.

Workers and young people from miles around came to Paris that day and filled the church. There were miners' and sharecroppers' delegations and a delegation from a Presbyterian college in the Ozarks, where a group of students for the ministry had found stimulus in Claude's brand of Christianity.

When the ministers went into session all the people had to leave the church, including the 121 church members, except three who were called in to testify for the eleven who signed the petition and three for the preacher's supporters. In the chair sat Dr. Hefner of Fort Smith.

The witnesses were heard. A letter was read from the retired colonel, regretting that a previous engagement prevented him from attending. The letter ran:

I have studiously avoided even the semblance of any thing or action that would tend to offend or mar the standing of this church or the community in which I have lived for more than 50 years. After careful consideration I can see nothing but an evil foreboding out of the circumstances that are now confronting this church. Frankly I am of the opinion that the longer C. C. Williams remains with this church the less good will be accomplished. His services in this church will only add to the abuse already inflicted. His attempted services to the church here has only been a secondary matter. As I see it, politics, socialism and things of this kind has occupied his time to visit the members, the sick, widows and orphans I have never heard of his doing.

By five o'clock the preacher had been officially removed from his church for the good of the Kingdom of God.

Claude stood before his judges.

"I am going to appeal this to the highest authorities of our Church if necessary," he said. "I will stay here and fight it either until I win or until you unfrock me for my convictions.

"No charge has been made against me here for my

beliefs, although the Board made such charges in petitioning for this hearing. The subject has been—it seems, carefully—avoided. But now I have to tell you that I have taken my stand with Jesus of Nazareth. And I do not even know, nor can any of us know, whether he ever actually existed. I do not care whether he is fact or myth. Whether he is fact or myth, I believe in him.

“If I believe he be fact, God was in him to a greater degree than in anyone else who ever lived. If I believe he be myth, then man felt the need of such a being, and by a divine urge created him and read into him the highest ethical heritage and moral concept of the race.

“If I believe in Jesus of Nazareth, I cannot believe in our present capitalist economy, which places property above humanity, enslaves to material cares the divine soul of man, and rewards unchristian conduct.

“If I believe in him, I cannot believe in imperialist war, in the mass murder of his creatures in order that still more souls may be enslaved to Mammon.

“If I believe in him, I cannot believe in race prejudice and discrimination, and must accept the potential equality of sexes, classes and races. I must accept that environment is the determining factor in character and habit formation, and that man has the power of ameliorating his environment.

“If I believe in him, I cannot believe in class antagonism and exploitation, which are inconsistent with Christian ethics, and I must therefore fight for the destruction of classes.

“If I believe in him, I cannot believe in social traditions and mores which are outgrown, repressive and immoral. I must take my stand, not with the pseudo-patriotism of State, not with the ethics of decadent capitalism, not with the myth of Nordic superiority, not with present bourgeois respectability, culture and standards. I must stand

not with the traditions of elders, politicians and industrialists, but with Jesus of Nazareth, who identified himself with the masses and gave his life in the attempt to establish a righteous religion upon earth."

There was a long silence. The preacher of Paris stood there with his eyes flashing the great wrath of his convictions. His accusers busied themselves with papers and fidgeted with their hats.

In a grave voice one of the minister-judges finally spoke.

"If you had done nothing else," he said, "what you have just said is enough to dissolve this pastoral relationship. You ought to be tried."

X

And he said unto him, . . . if thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments. . . . The young man saith unto him, All these things have I observed; what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wouldst be perfect, go, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, follow me.—MATTHEW

There is more morality in a juicy beefsteak than most moralists imagine.—CARLYLE

A FEW DAYS later Claude had formal notice to vacate the manse, on pain of removal according to law.

He was too busy to bother with it, and threw it aside. If they wanted to come and remove him, they would just have to remove him. But he did not think they would try it.

He was carrying on his work and there were a hundred things to be done. Carey, the Paris movie showman, who had fallen into the habit of borrowing subversive books from the manse shelves, had invited him to hold Sunday services there. The preacher took the body of his congregation over to the theater with him, leaving the old guard to worship their God as best they could in the church while they sought another pastor obscure or humble enough to accept the niggardly stipend, and simple enough to believe he would actually receive it.

The Christian Service groups in other towns still needed him each week, and in Paris the Philosophers' Club and young people's groups went ahead. Under his Governor's Commission mandate he was making a survey of destitution among the thousands of miners, whose

filled-in questionnaires showed them to be existing on an average of \$250 a year. The autonomy movement in the miners' union, working unobtrusively since the suspension from the union of the elected officials, was going forward under the leadership of himself and Horace Bryan, a young miner who had organized and led the movement at Greenwood. The accident of being an exceptional ballplayer had won for Bryan a better education than most miners could get, and he had wound it up with a course at Commonwealth which had made him class-conscious. He had no means of transportation from Greenwood and often hitch-hiked the whole forty miles to Paris for conferences. An autonomy committee of twelve key men in the various mines was quietly organized, and the slogan was raised: One class-struggle union of all miners, one national agreement, six-hour day without reduction in pay.

The mine-owners were aware of the movement, and feared that the men might strike for autonomy and a decent contract. The Business and Professional Men's Club in Paris was seeking landlords' signatures to an agreement not to rent houses to undesirable miners, and was trying to stop the Federal public-works schemes which now made the men less than entirely dependent on their jobs in the mine.

Claude and Bryan were also organizing the unemployed of the district into a mass union. The preacher managed to accept all the requests that still poured in for him to speak at workers' meetings. At a mass meeting on the Paris courthouse square he urged the people to stand together against their oppressors to the last. He explained to the people as best he could the most bewildering contradiction yet displayed by the profit system in crisis: the plowing-under of cotton and destruction of food,

which was now proceeding on a national organized scale while millions were naked and hungry.

In the *Paris Excuse* he wrote:

The battle is on. A tragic human toll is already being registered. The casualty list is bloodcurdling to those who seeing, see and hearing, hear. How reads it to date? Millions unemployed, footsore, defeated, and with manhood wounded. 9,000,000 undernourished school-children, to say nothing of those of pre-school age and other millions out of school. Doors of 110 hospitals closed in one year with millions needing medical, surgical, dental care. 200,000 teachers marooned, school budgets drastically cut, savings from which presumably to be transferred to future prison-building programs to house criminals resulting from the reduction in funds for education. Large per cent of the 13,000,000 Negroes destitute, first turned off and last taken on, with outright discrimination even on government work program; Negroes disfranchised, denied political and jury representation—but little evidence that the Negro is very much worse off in many sections than in 1860. 10,000 banks closed, millions of innocent patriots robbed of life's savings. Farms, homes and other properties confiscated by banks, insurance companies and moneylenders. Ministers swinging to left—some of these may actually become Christian. Mob violence breaking out—one State Governor positively commending a lynching, others as exemplified by Scottsboro and Crawford cases believing it more ethical to resort to legal lynching by mock trial. Mental breakdowns: shell-shocked bulging the walls of insane asylums. Nightmare of economic insecurity hanging over the masses with its energy-draining, nerve-racking terror.

But a new commander-in-chief, President Roosevelt. Method of warfare reversed, back turned on defensive warfare, offensive method only emphasized. Political corruption, plutocratic knavery, imperialistic exploitation, economic sabotage, industrial racketeering, intellectual hypocrisy and religious stupidity show signs of weakening.

Conflict already lasted longer than the World War; its consequences will be more terrifying unless each man betakes himself to the most unusual, if not un-American, task of understanding some of the issues and the fundamental changes demanded.

The preacher was behind the broad New Deal program with everything he had, needing in any case only to observe who its enemies were to know where God stood in the matter. Sinful as was the deliberate destruction of crops, it was idle to expect people raised and conditioned in an insane asylum to become sane overnight. Such particular absurdities did not affect the plainly-visible general trend. Nevertheless a certain part of him began to be troubled: that potent instinct against superleadership which had always been in his blood. Just because Roosevelt was relieving somewhat the immediate hardships of the mass of Americans, the people must not get superstitious ideas into their heads about Roosevelt, as if he were a divinity. On the contrary, they must watch and pray harder than ever, more organized than ever. In an article, "Roosevelt The Man of the Hour—Is He the Man of the Age?", Claude presented such sober reflections. Whether or no this President was going to do the really fundamental things, he wrote, was something only time could show.

To carry on his work now the preacher did not need his church position, except for one thing: he and his family needed to eat, and without his pastorate he could not get even the reduced allowance which the Board of Missions had been paying him. He was worth ten times as much to the people of the region whose cause he had taken up, but they were too poor to feed themselves and could not feed him.

The money from the sale of his last insurance policy was almost gone. Not a kopek had come in from Moscow.

He did not know how he would provide for the children. He could not help worrying over this, but he did not have much time for thinking about it. It was more Joyce's worry, but she did not want to impede the work and she managed to be casual about it. She was getting used to living from day to day and keeping calm.

As for the children, only Claudera the baby was still unconscious of the storms beating against the manse and the family. At school, Constance and Cornelia were allowed no illusions as to the kind of father they had drawn. They heard that he was a nigger-lover, a bolshevik, a lunatic, a devil in human guise.

Inevitably there were times when Claude castigated himself on the children's behalf for taking the course he had, wondering whether it was fair to subject innocents to the consequences of his actions. And yet when they were confused they came to him for explanation with an air of calm assurance that he could clear everything up quite easily. Cornelia would come and say:

"Daddy, soandso at school says you don't believe the Bible."

And Claude would reply: "Well, I think I know what she means." Then he would perhaps tell her the story of Jonah and the whale, and when he had finished would ask:

"Do you believe that?"

"No—of course not."

"Well, the difference between soandso and me is that she believes it actually happened, and I just believe it's a good story with a good lesson in it."

By a mature and dignified instinct, they gave him no hint of the share of the family load which they in their children's world had to carry. Yet the fact that they had it to carry was plain enough from the rapturous delight they showed when someone respectable actually agreed

with Claude on some issue. One day Constance had rushed in from school fairly wriggling with delight, flung herself at him and cried:

"Daddy, my teacher believes like you do about the Indians!"

Claude was going to do what he had said at the hearing: fight to the last ditch. The Synod of Arkansas, to which he appealed the case, set a day for a new hearing and appointed a commission to investigate further. He was even now confident that when the full facts came out, when it was seen that the great majority of the people were on his side, the verdict would be reversed. He still had his two powerful friends in the Church, Dr. Gillespie at Little Rock and Dr. Wilson in New York.

His case was the very essence of that struggle to which the Religion and Labor Foundation was committed. The story was splashed in the Foundation's magazine, and a few days later the train from the North brought Willard Uphaus, who was deputized to make a full report.

Uphaus was a scholarly, kindly man, a Christian Socialist of burning sincerity. He believed that unless Christianity fought the battles of the poor it was not Christian. He went about over the whole field in which Claude was working and talked with scores of people in all walks of life. The poor people told him they loved and respected their preacher.

One miner said: "He represents Christ, and him alive in our midst."

The barber on the courthouse square said: "The young people would jump in the lake for him."

Negroes down in the bottom described with glowing faces how they had sat at his table. Howard Lee, one of several Paris boys whom Claude had influenced to enter the ministry, said:

"He attempts to explain just what the religion of Jesus means to the hungry man. It was not until he came here that God, Jesus or Christianity became meaningful to me and I began to appreciate those spiritual forces that inspire men to strive and achieve."

The retired county school superintendent said: "I readily encouraged my two sons to join the Williams forces and have never regretted it. I left the Methodist Church and joined the Presbyterian Church that I, in my middle age, might be taught to think."

John Williams, the farmer-Assemblyman, said: "He has a better insight into matters of economy than any other man in these parts. I consider him an authority. Our laboring people might have caused trouble if he had not counseled and conciliated. So far as working people are concerned, he is their ideal. They just worship him."

The blacksmith cursed the elders for their hypocrisy and remarked that he didn't like the idea of a kettle throwing up a black ass to a pot.

Uphaus also called upon the five church leaders who had organized the ousting movement. He was received by the retired colonel in his red, white and blue house. The colonel said:

"The preacher is against good government. Right or wrong, niggers will never have social equality in the South. He believes in socialism, or that something else . . ." He paused, unable to bring to his lips the terrible word.

The elder who took the nudist magazine for inspection said:

"Mr. Williams says there is no such thing as personal salvation. He doesn't believe in the Virgin Birth, nor that the whale swallowed Jonah. Once a miner came into the church drunk. They found a whiskey bottle right in the church. The preacher himself drinks beer. Someone saw

a nudist magazine among his reading materials. Young people discuss everything in that Philosophers' Club, even sex."

The editor-elder objected to Claude on Presbyterian principles and also mentioned that the preacher had campaigned for the communistic Tugwell Bill against false advertising.

The realtor said:

"Reverend Williams never made a success of anything. He is a radical. We think he is crazy. The miners do not listen to him preach. They just go for the recreation. He smokes, swears, drinks and plays cards."

On the way to visit the plantation lady at her residence amid her ancestral acres, Uphaus met a miner who gave an opinion of the realtor and his kind of Christianity: "If my dawg caught such religion, I'd kill damn dawg. If I had Uncle Joe in a sack, I'd drownd sack."

Uphaus explained his mission to the plantation lady through her bolted screen-door. She cried:

"Oh, Mr. Williams is not our pastor any more."

She inspected her visitor for some time through the wire mesh and then hesitatingly undid the latch, saying: "Well, I'll be courteous enough to ask you to come in, anyway."

Inside, she parried with a theological catechism Uphaus' question about the preacher's work. She demanded to know whether Uphaus believed in the Virgin Birth, in the divinity of Jesus, and in the Trinity. Not yet satisfied, she asked whether his mother believed in the Virgin Birth.

Uphaus eased the conversation around to the teachings of Jesus.

"If Jesus were in Paris," he said, "what attitude would he take towards workers and Negroes?"

His question again backfired at him. The lady wanted

to know whether he would like his daughter to marry a nigras, and he had to explain that he had no daughter. She went on:

"Why, people in a different class don't enjoy what we enjoy. Nigras would not want to come into our homes as equals. When we get to heaven there will be equality. God did not intend it here. When Jesus talked about coming into our house, he did not mean material house: he meant our hearts."

The appeal hearing was held in another town. The commission appointed by Synod to investigate the facts further had not investigated because, it reported, it could not get a quorum. But Uphaus had spent many days collecting evidence for and against the preacher and was ready to produce it at the hearing. And resolutions of protest from the great majority of Presbyterian church members, and from twentyeight workers' organizations representing five thousand people of the district, showed how the popular tide ran. One miners' resolution testified:

Brother Williams appears to be a man of courage, faith, devotion, ability, influence and integrity; a man of power; a man that men can and do love and respect; a tireless worker; a Christian after Christ; a leader and a gentleman. It is apparent that he is being removed from the church of his choice because of his sympathies for the man with the hoe and the shovel and the plow.

Another UMWA local wrote:

He has at our request responded to and rendered signal service in our struggle. Never did he neglect to point out the value of orderly procedure and admonished the miners to follow a righteous and honorable course. Can it be possible that in this hour of worldwide distress when the masses are thrown into a maze of bewilderment, the directors of an In-

stitution founded on the principles of Brotherhood will become subservient to a narrow selfish religious policy? This we do not believe and shall cherish the hope that religious freedom in its true sense will be the agency through which all forms of evil may be suppressed in the interest of the masses and a higher standard of Christian civilization.

The Communist Party of Arkansas, demanding reversal of the verdict although it could not claim the preacher as a member, remarked:

We see in this the distinct class character of the Church which is merely a tool in the hands of the ruling class, the capitalists.

Claude was grateful for the Communists' unsolicited support, for to his enemies he was already a tool of Moscow, and nothing the Communists said for or against him could affect that judgment. But he saw their analysis as an over-simplified generalization. Some of the most effective protests sent to the Synod came from propertied people in Paris who were in his sense of the word enlightened Christians. The tug of economic interest was strong, but the spirit could still triumph over it. He even had among his supporters a young banker, who said that he did not care if the preacher was red, he was always eighteen months ahead of everyone else, and when he said such-and-such would happen, it happened. And a merchant, son of a Confederate soldier and a member of the Baptists, most conservative of all Southern churches, wrote:

I have been with him on speaking engagements with workmen and have never heard the faintest suggestion that he was a communist. In all of his speeches he expounded the social gospel of Jesus. His meetings have all had a religious flavor. Communism is a term loosely applied in this section to all thinkers who dare leave the old aristocratic traditional

doctrines. The miners sensed their rights and he gave them the vigor of manhood which Jesus would have them possess, but which is denied them by their overlords, the landed interests and coal operators. He attacked problems with frankness, but with sincerity and devotion. He is not a demagogue in any sense of the word. His ability and scholarship are equal to the task he undertook in his study courses. He believes that one of the functions of religion is to utilize the vast body of social and scientific knowledge which has been made available in this generation. He would let the spirit of Jesus prevail in its application.

This section of the country needs the ministry of Rev. Williams. There is a great proletarian awakening throughout the country. It needs enlightened leadership which he is able to give. Left to itself, or to designing politicians, it will be dangerous to the safety of the country. Given the religion of Jesus and not merely a set of tenets to be observed on the Sabbath, it will turn its vigor into useful channels. This statement is submitted in behalf of a man who has been done an injustice.

Before the appeal hearing opened, hours had been spent by the assembled divines and jurisconsults pondering over tomes of Presbyterian law. There was a protracted and animated discussion of whether the appeal court should properly be called a commission or a committee. The course that was finally decided upon for the hearing made all evidence about Claude's work and standing with the people irrelevant. The court was no more interested in Uphaus' report, no more concerned with the pleas of Dr. Gillespie and Dr. Wilson than with the terse demand of the Communist Party. The charges against Reverend Williams as man and minister were not, the court said, at issue, but only the legal correctness of the verdict dissolving the pastoral relationship. This verdict it confirmed on the ground that there was

a division in the church membership which seemingly could not be healed.

There was a third appeal hearing, and again the verdict was confirmed. Already there were two hundred and thirteen Christian Gods, and the officials of the U.S.A. Presbyterian Church evidently felt that this was enough: at all costs there must be unity. The brethren were grieved, they said, at the necessity for this pastoral dissolution. But as it seemed impossible for all to serve the Lord together under Rev. Williams' leadership, it was for the Lord's best interests that he be removed. There was nothing that even Dr. Wilson, who had traveled especially from New York for the second hearing, could do save to admonish Dr. Hefner, the Moderator, to see that Claude's arrears of salary were paid.

Claude had one further appeal he could make, and he made it: to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. He had loved this Church and believed in it in spite of its shortcomings. It was founded on the democratic ideal which was his ideal.

Everywhere else he had found, buried under the democratic cloak of the capitalist state, the fangs of imposed top-down control ready to devour the people when they tried to make the voice of the majority effective. Because he was human and in need of something on earth to believe in, he had nursed the fading belief that this Church of his would not be found wanting when the test came. He had had faith that this Church, whose words were so brave, would stand not for privilege, but for God and the people. There was little of this faith left for him now.

For the moment he was mentally and physically drooping. He had time to sort out his ideas during the week's holiday at Petit Jean Mountain to which Uphaus treated him and his family. It was the first rest he and Joyce had

enjoyed, even for a day, since they came to Paris, save for his brief stay in the sanatorium.

He received at the Mountain the Commonwealth College magazine which commented at length on his case. It said:

Rev. Claude Williams, who has distressed the well-to-do of Paris, may seem to be at first glance only another modernist. He preached "the religion of Jesus, not the religion *about* Jesus." He knows "nothing of the supernatural, nor of heaven and hell."

But the fundamental difference between Williams and the typical modernist preacher is this: Williams speaks for and is supported by coal diggers rather than by wealthy young agnostics. He has been in every labor fight in his district since 1932. His career as a pastor for the Presbyterian flock has been ended by the church board, and now with a wife and three children he is without any means of support. He has known for a long time what he was getting into. He is in the fight so deeply that he is more interested in the fight than in his own welfare.

By "religion" he means about the same as a Marxian means by "class consciousness." However much we may object to the use of vague and ancient terms for revolutionary concepts, we should recognize the concepts for what they are. But certainly he needs to clarify his own thinking by the substitution of scientific terms for theological terms. He should get into the current of Marxian thought so that he can participate philosophically as well as emotionally in the world proletarian movement.

It is important of course to know how the Arkansas miner thinks and how to approach him on familiar ground, and this Williams knows perhaps better than anyone in the State; but it is also of vast importance to know how the world proletariat is thinking and has thought, and this latter knowledge may be found in the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, etc. This is Williams' great lack. Without it he can never be much more than he now is—a most remarkable thorn

in the side of the well-to-do of Paris and the surrounding towns.

Claude thought of the Communist Party's resolution of protest: "We see in this the distinct class character of the Church which is merely a tool in the hands of the capitalists." It had the usual frigid, unhuman quality of any Communist analysis. It ignored the power of the spirit within the individual man, and it made no mention of the fact that there were people of property defending him, just as there were poor people who were against him.

And yet, though it did not seem to be the whole truth, he could not escape the truth in it. What he had just experienced had been the class struggle in action inside the Church: the struggle in which the disinherited fought consciously, but with no weapon except their solidarity, and the protectors of property fought with the dimmest consciousness of their class alignment, with the weapon of force to which they gave the polite name Law and Order. The issue was confused because the Church officially represented God. But he knew with an iron certainty that the Church did not represent God when it fought against the people, because the people's cause was God's cause. Throughout the Bible the words Righteous and Poor, Wicked and Rich, were used synonymously. Was not the class struggle only another name for the old fight between God and Mammon, since Mammon could only be property and privilege which were the root of sin?

He came back to Paris in fighting trim. He had not needed the suggestions from Commonwealth to sharpen his militancy and make him more aware of the inescapable class struggle. Living events had taught him respect for the Marxian social philosophy. Knowing that there was truth in it, he could not rest until he had studied it

exhaustively to find out how much truth there was. He had never been afraid of truth and he never would be, despite all the witch-hunts that might be organized against him. God was truth, and if there was truth in Marx and Lenin, then there was God in Marx and Lenin.

Little time as he had for reading, he devoted every minute of it now to the Bible and books of Marxist theory and practice. He began to see the development of man more clearly as an uninterrupted process: the process of birth, struggle, death and re-birth. He saw that it was not a question of advocating capitalism or advocating socialism. Capitalism was but a step, and a necessary and inevitable one, to the Kingdom which was man's goal. It had served its purpose, and whatever men did to defend or to destroy it, it must certainly die: it brought forth out of its own womb the antagonist by which it was destined to be slain. The inevitability of that process, in the economic as in all other phases of life, was the one God-ordained thing of which man could be sure, and all else was dark until the coming of the Kingdom.

Reading for the first time the whole of Marx's passage about religion, a light suddenly shone for him: the passage actually had a beauty and nobility almost worthy of the Bible itself. It was like reading Isaiah. "The opium of the people," Marx called religion, but went on:

It is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the kindliness of a heartless world, the spirit of unspiritual conditions. Criticism of religion is therefore at heart a criticism of the vale of misery for which religion is the promised vision. Criticism has torn away the imaginary flowers with which his chains were bedecked, not in order that man should wear his chains without the comfort of illusions, but that he may throw off the chains and pluck the living flowers. Criticism of religion disillusions man so that he may think, act and shape his reality as one who is disillusioned and come to full under-

standing, so that he may move on his own axis and thus be his own sun. Religion is but the false sun which revolves around him while he is not yet fully self-aware.

It was no paradox for Claude, in the state of mind that was now his, to see in these sentences a great Christian message. It did not attack the spirit of God, or good, in man, but on the contrary called for its highest fulfillment. The religion it attacked was only the priestly, supernatural religion of pie-in-the-sky, the religion of Gentle Jesus Meek and Mild, who was a deliberately concocted fiction. And for such religion he had nothing but scorn, knowing as he did that they were the supernatural trimmings with which false prophets always adorned mankind's great leaders, whether it might be Jesus or Moses, Joan of Arc or Buddha. The clash was not between Marxism and religion, but between Marxism and supernatural, ceremonial religion.

In August Uphaus, Winifred Chappell, Webb with a Commonwealth delegation, and several young ministers of the South foregathered in the Paris manse with rank-and-file union men for a conference. A discussion on Southern conditions resulted in a general conclusion:

In such crucial times as these, too much energy and money should not be diverted from the existing revolutionary movements toward the building of Church organizations, and this Conference recommends young radical ministers who remain in the Church to: Get into churches controlled by workers and not controlled by the owning class, so that they may be free in their utterances and actions; Realize that the kind of preaching they want to do does not necessitate large church buildings; Study the findings and recommendations of the Council of Younger Churchmen of the South; Consider themselves part of the revolutionary move-

ment; Make their activities feed into the existing revolutionary groups instead of forming a new and separate movement.

After the conference Claude talked Marxism with Webb.

"Listen," he said, "let's straighten this thing out. Here's me, believing in the inevitable coming of the Kingdom of God, and here's you, believing in the inevitable coming of the new society of plenty without the profit motive or exploitation. The faith both of us have in this makes it possible and necessary for us to go on working for whatever-we-call-it. I believe that the poor are God's chosen instrument because theirs is the Kingdom, and you believe the proletariat are history's chosen instrument for theirs is the key to the new society. We both believe in the divine essence of man: I call it God and I don't know what you call it. I believe in the power of aggressive love and we both believe in the power of aggressive union. Is there really so much difference?"

"Well," said Webb, "sure, we're working for the same immediate things. But you'll have to give up your God if you're completely honest and follow this through to the end. You may use theological terms in an unsupernatural way, but can the people, who are used only to supernatural religion, understand them that way? And if they don't, aren't you misleading them?"

"I think they can. I know they can. I have perhaps a higher opinion of the people's intelligence than you have. The need for symbols to express the fight for them is old and deep and human. Look what a symbol the Russian people have made out of the embalmed body of Lenin in the Red Square! These symbols help them to understand, provided they are and remain only symbols."

"But there's an essential difference between your conception and mine, preacher. You see spirit and matter as

two different things, while for me the mind is merely the highest form of matter. When you become a pure materialist you stop believing in anything but matter, which can neither be created nor destroyed. You cannot believe in any after-life for the individual, nor that there's any force outside of matter and separate from it which affects men's action. Men act to satisfy certain hungers of their material being; they continue so to act until they die; and then they no longer can act because as men they no longer exist."

"There you go! The cold Marxian simplification again. But is it as simple as all that? As to immortality: I don't have to believe in spooks to accept it, and you of all people must accept it, a follower of Marx and Lenin. You admit that their material part cannot be destroyed, but returns to the earth to feed and build new life after them. And surely you won't deny that the spirit of those two dead men is a more potent force today than the material reality of a million living people?"

"Spirits? Their books are material enough. There they are, up in your shelves."

"If Lenin had never committed a single line to paper his spirit would be just as potent. I tell you, science can understand and explain matter, but there are things of the spirit that it cannot explain, only accept. The two great mysteries of life remain: love and death. And I'd like you, a Marxist, to explain in a rational, materialist way why it is that you live as you do. You are not strictly of the proletariat yourself. You are clever and you could get yourself a good job if you wanted, in business or in some respectable school. Yet you throw everything overboard and risk your very life to help the poorest and humblest, who have nothing to give you but their gratitude. Why?"

"Don't forget that Moscow gold. But seriously, I

should answer that I enjoy it. And if you want the theoretical basis, it's there in Marx. He said there would always be a few members of the middle and farmer class who would throw in their lot with the proletariat, because they would arrive at an intellectual conviction. When you arrive at such a conviction there is nothing else you can do but put it into action."

"That still doesn't explain for me why it is that you arrive at this conviction, and thousands of others, apparently just like you in other respects, do not. The fact seems to remain that the human spirit is a queer animal and mocks all your rigid attempts to classify men, and foretell their actions, on the basis of their economic and class interests. Why you especially? For that matter, why Marx? Was there ever such a case as that of a life sacrificed to interests that were outside of self? It isn't simply a question of intelligence: there are many cerebellums of the first quality across the fence from us. I say this is unexplainable, but I have a word for this unexplainable spirit of good in man. I call it God. It's a simple little word and saves me breath and headaches."

"And I say that any good psycho-analyst could explain it, though it is difficult and takes time to dig out all the conditioning factors. It can be anything from over-developed thyroids to a fall down stairs, or combinations of those and many other things. Your trouble is that you still can't see how a class always and necessarily acts as a class, regardless of the unorthodoxy or desertion of certain individuals within it."

The great crisis was well into its fifth year. Claude was so close to the pain of the people that his personal economic crisis rushed to its final phase half unnoticed. While he still had a few dollars he was rich.

The church owed him more than \$2,000 in back sal-

ary. The only money the board had spent on him since he first publicly championed the miners was two dollars to have the lock on the church door changed, so that he could no longer get in and pollute the place. A leading lawyer of the town, who had refused to help the elders evict Claude, advised him to sue them for the debt and said he would give his services free to this end.

"You sit tight," he told Claude over a beer at the pool hall. "My town is the loser if you get kicked out. We could use more preachers that commit your kind of crimes. I told those soandso's I'd do everything I could to prevent you being evicted."

One of the church board members, meeting Claude on the street, said: "We're going to starve you out." Another eviction notice came in September, and he ignored it. By the same mail he received an official nomination from the Arkansas Socialist Party as its candidate for Governor.

His suit against the board for back salary was not due to be heard until January. A group of Commonwealth students made it known that, if an attempt were made to evict the preacher, they would come and picket the manse; if his belongings were set out in the street, they would set them right back in. Claude announced that on the day of the eviction, if the board went through with it, he would have an all-day picnic on the manse lawn to which all the miners, farmers and young people would be invited. There was no eviction.

He was fighting the people's battles on a hollow stomach, and getting very thin. The thankless routine work that he was always ready to undertake kept him up often until nearly dawn.

He wrote resolutions, by-laws and other documents for every labor group. He typed out over a hundred copies of one resolution, sixtyfive of another, and always had to furnish stamps, paper and carbons. He circulated

them around, and on a single resolution to the Relief Administration he got signatures representing sixty thousand men. At the same time he was preparing a great Conference on Economic Justice in Paris: organizing it, inviting delegates from all over the country and arranging for their accommodation, collecting and classifying data.

Yet the calls upon him from other towns to be present at meetings were so incessant that he seldom spent two consecutive days in Paris. The workers were being starved and beaten down, and their will to resist needed stiffening with firm leadership. When he promised to come, he seldom knew where he would get the money for gasoline, but somehow he got it when the time came, because he had to have it.

In October he borrowed from Joyce the last dollar she had in her reserve to take him to a mass meeting of relief workers and miners at Altus. He had just been offered \$500 by a politician to use his influence with the miners. Next day he received four dollars from Uphaus in New York, which tided the family over the week-end. Three weeks later, the day after the sixty out-of-town delegates to his Economic Justice Conference had scattered, there was nothing left to do but sell the car on which he depended. The money went for paying bills and stocking up with a few groceries, and he had to hitch-hike to meetings when the people needed him.

The family was now dependent on gifts that came in from people who had heard about his work and situation: a parcel of clothes or canned food here, a few dollars there. The children were fed and clothed somehow, and they were far better off than the Negro and unemployed families, who received no gifts.

Although he had nothing for himself and was overburdened with work, Claude accepted his seasonal obli-

gation to sell Christmas stamps and bonds for the Arkansas Tubercular Association. He sold nearly \$100 worth, mostly to small merchants of the town, who responded generously although they were almost bankrupt because the people had no money to spend with them. Many of the richer citizens said they could not buy T.B. seals because they had to get a Thanksgiving turkey and had nothing over. A very wealthy man, president of a railroad, bought twentyfive cents' worth of stamps.

Thanksgiving Day came, and the family had for dinner some turnip greens that a miner had given from his garden patch. Ward Rodgers, who had been away on a job of workers' education in Texas for the Relief Administration, came by that day. He still had a little Washington gold left and gave Claude seven dollars of it. Claude wrote to the State Relief Administration reminding them that he had applied months ago for a workers' education job, and what about it? He did not expect to get any such job. He was too subversive for anything with money attached to it, although for thankyou jobs like selling T.B. seals he was the best person in town. He found next time he was in Little Rock that his application for a job had been pigeonholed and forgotten. The official who had blocked it had said: "Don't let that application get by. He is red—a damn communist."

His lungs were acting up and his general health was in poor shape. That seemed to be the one bright spot on the horizon, because the doctor said he ought to qualify for a disability pension, either from the army or from the Church or from both.

He noticed one thing that his treatment at the hands of the Church had done to him: he no longer had any stomach for the vague liberals who surged about the fringe of the progressive and revolutionary movement. The sweetness and light of Christian Socialism began to

give him a pain. After reading Lenin's *State and Revolution* and *Imperialism* he found his views taking even firmer and clearer shape. He was inspired by Lenin, by his parallel greatness as theoretical and active revolutionary, by his incisiveness and surefootedness, by his quick analysis of a situation, and by his faith, which under the most terrible buffetings was a rock, like the faith of Jesus.

Leaving behind as he was all doubt that he was fighting in a world war, he could not do with people who still pretended to others and to themselves that the enemy could be soothed by stroking his fur. He saw the monster of barbarism, the fascist Antichrist, rising up all over the world and in America to place chains upon the growing God of humanity and drag him back into a cave. The advance of the Antichrist was appalling in its speed, and if there had ever been time for compromise, vacillation and division in the people's ranks there was none now. To fight effectively it was necessary to strip off all illusion and sentimentality, all loyalties based to any degree on sentiment.

He was unhappy about Uphaus and the Religion and Labor Foundation. He sat down many times to write a frank letter to Uphaus about it, but he could never succeed in expressing what he felt. He wrote to say he would have to part company with the Foundation because it was compromising, but he tore the letter up. Somehow his doubts drifted back to Uphaus, who wired asking him to deny the rumor that he had repudiated the Foundation's leadership. He wired back that he had not repudiated it, but could not be identified with an organization that was merely liberal.

He was in fact ready to accept revolutionary socialism as the only practical program. It was the young people grouped around him in Paris who, having once mastered

the principles of Marxian thought from the books he lent them, swept forward eagerly and firmly on the revolutionary path and swept him with them. He had warned them to consider his example and disillusion themselves about what they could expect from society, but they were ready to face for their convictions whatever lay ahead. Most of them were active in the Socialist Party and had co-operated with Claude's Fellowship of Christian Revolutionists. There would nearly always be some of them at the manse, discussing and studying and planning. Graduates of the manse youth circle were out working for the cause in far cities, and were heard from and talked about. One girl, a former supporter of Oriental missions, who was in New York doing social education work among Negroes, wrote: "I spend on this work all the time and pin-money I used to give to teaching Chinese tots that Confucius was a bum." Zelfhia Mae, daughter of a well-to-do coal-owner in Paris, was told she would have to choose between her home and the preacher's. There were young Negroes in the circle. One day in December Joyce, feeling ill, could not hide from Claude her weariness and dejection: she confessed the revolution had got her down. Helen, a colored girl of sixteen, came by to return Shaw's *Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism*, which she had been reading. She stayed for a week doing all the housework, giving Joyce a chance to rest up. Things adjusted themselves like that and life went on.

Claude had talked philosophy and economics and religion with every kind of people, young and old, poor and rich, Negro and white, sinner and saint, tory and rebel. He found he could never tell where sympathy for his position would unexpectedly emerge. A Catholic priest in Fort Smith had co-operated in his Economic Justice Conference. After the Conference another priest

had paid him a surprise call and they had discussed social and religious questions for several hours. He sold this priest some socialist pamphlets, but the priest annoyed him with his stubborn arguments for a personal Creator; a chain, he kept saying, must have a first link. Claude argued the point a little, but he no longer had any spirit in him for such matters. While the men of God quibbled over these theoretical unknowables, the Antichrist was marching on, destroying God.

He was conversant with the encouraging leftward movement among ministers, but he was surprised to find, at the Conference of Younger Churchmen of the South in Chattanooga, Tennessee, how far it had gone. Up to the last moment he did not know how he would get to attend the Conference. On the day before he would have to leave, he still did not have the money for the fare. Zephia Mae and some of the young people came in by the back door, lingered in the kitchen, and marched into the parlor with a tray of coffee and cake. They handed him some cake on a nest of dollar bills, one from each of them: his fare to Chattanooga.

He read *Dialectical Materialism* in the train as far as Nashville, where he stopped off for some hours to visit with Buck Kester and his wife and to lecture for Alva Taylor's class at Vanderbilt. Kester went on with him to Chattanooga. He had no money, but he was the guest of the Conference. There were white and colored preachers gathered from all over the South, and the delegates from workers' organizations spoke about the conditions of terror under which union work was going on.

The atmosphere of the Conference was revolutionary. A resolution was passed unanimously supporting Claude in his fight against the Presbyterian hierarchy. A telegram was sent to the Governor of Georgia protesting against his use of State troops to break an ironworkers'

strike: "We stand with the workers in their rights to strike and picket peacefully and to organize for bettering their condition." Strikers from Chattanooga's hosiery mills told the Conference that only five out of eightyfour mills were living up to the NRA Code obligations, and that workers were being forced to take up to half of their starvation wages in grocery orders on company-owned stores. The Conference went on record as demanding in the name of Christ the abolition of a system that depended for its existence on the exploitation of one group by another. After it was over, a Communist Party delegate from Alabama said to Claude:

"I felt like a conservative in that crowd."

Kester gave Claude three dollars, and Dr. Hunter, a liberal minister in Little Rock, paid his fare the rest of the way home. Back in Paris, the first job he had to do was to preach the funeral of a ten-months-old baby, who had died of pneumonia and colitis from inadequate food. It was a sermon no other minister cared to preach. The baby's father was doing relief work and receiving nine dollars and sixty cents a month to support a family of four. Claude said it was not the will of God that the baby should die, nor was it the work of some horned devil. It was a clear case of murder, and millions of other babies in America were being similarly murdered by the profit system.

A box of groceries from a Rabbi in Nashville had kept Claude's family going. He realized how lucky he was, having such friends. Christmas was approaching, and some of the young folk came to decorate the manse and play Santa Claus to the children. Somebody sent a ten-dollar bill, and a check for twelve dollars came from Uphaus.

The children had a happy Christmas day, and Claude and Joyce were able to send off a box of clothes to

Claude's mother and father and aunts, who were reduced to great privations. In the afternoon Montgomery Bird, a Negro of seventythree, came by with a sack containing turnips and dried peas.

"I didn't have a thing to bring but sentiment," said the old man. "And I thought I'd just bring it along in a sack."

On New Year's Day there was enough for quite a dinner. One of the miners' locals had sent a New Year present of five dollars. Claude borrowed a car to go for some of the old men in the Old Folks' Home and bring them back to share the dinner. At first the old men did not want to come in the rags which were all they had to wear. Three of them had no shirts, and they were very dirty because the Home had no bath. One of them was blind, and broke down at the table because of his helplessness. Claude gave them what clothes he had. He had two spare shirts, and he took off the one he was wearing and gave it to the third shirtless man so that each should have one.

A young fellow came in later on and wanted to give Claude fifteen cents.

"I just want to give it," he said.

Claude would not take it, and as he was leaving the young man said:

"I'll pick you a load of coal down by the mine and send it. I just want to send it."

"We're all right," Claude said. "We keep warm."

"I want to send it. I'd been wanting all my life to hear the things you've been saying."

In general, 1934 had been a big year for the profit system.

The World Committee for Relief was able to announce that during the year 2,400,000 human beings

died of starvation and another 1,200,000 destitute people killed themselves.

During the same period a million freightcar loads of grain, 267,000 freightcar loads of coffee, 560,000 hundredweight of sugar, 50,000 hundredweight of rice, \$110,000,000 worth of cotton, and 50,000 hundredweight of meat had been destroyed to maintain profitable prices. To complete the system's rescue for the year, \$33,000,000 worth of pig-sows had had their throats cut so that they might not reproduce their kind, and corn-hog production and wheat acreage had been "controlled" to the extent of \$452,000,000. In the United States alone there were about ten million people wanting work and unable to get it, and over twelve billion work-days that might have gone to filling their needs had been idled away by the people in the five years of the crisis.

In Paris, Arkansas, a red preacher was still stirring up the people by suggesting that food was for eating, timber and stone and cotton for making the people clothes and homes. He said he spoke for God and that God had once stood for these things. God was credited with being the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, and though no one seemed to have heard from him lately, the preacher was confident he still stood for these things.

In the second week of the New Year the Circuit Court considered this preacher's claim against the Presbyterian church board for unpaid salary amounting to \$2,299.

Claude told the jury of Southern Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Cumberlanders and Holy Rollers that Dr. Wilson, the chief under whom he had worked, had admonished Synod to see the debt was paid. He showed that Synod had not denied the money was justly owing.

This ended the case for which the preacher had come to court. There was no further mention of any debt owing to him. The church board's attorney, with the judge's

sanction, put Claude on trial on the elders' charges which the church courts had refused to consider.

Witnesses were brought who claimed they had actually seen the preacher's Communist Party card, and who swore he had said Jesus was a bastard and had taught their children free-love and nudism.

The attorney said:

"Just tell this jury of honest God-fearing men what is your position on Jonah?"

"I accept that story as a parable cloaking significant truths. Here was a man who thought he was superior to everyone else. He got a lesson that taught him differently. There's truth in the story."

"Now tell the jury straight. Do you or do you not believe in the Virgin Birth?"

"It doesn't make any difference to me whether Jesus was born of a virgin or not. He was more than an ordinary man. People who knew him recognized him as a superior type. He was a big man."

Now the attorney brought his face close to the preacher's on the witness-stand and shouted:

"Didn't you have niggers eat at your table while you were pastor?"

"Yes, I did. And I was careful to pull up the shades."

The jury gasped. The attorney recovered his balance as if he had received a violent blow in the face.

The verdict was reached in three minutes. The preacher was to pay the church board eighty dollars as rent for the manse, plus interest, for the time since he had notice to quit. Closing the proceedings, the judge looked at Claude with a disgust he did not try to hide. He felt unclean in this red preacher's presence; everything he held sacred had been outraged.

Claude went back to the manse and sat with Joyce in the little study, surrounded by the books which had led

him astray from the God of juries. From the wall Jesus, Debs and a third face, Lenin, looked down on them.

The preacher was rather white and there were shadows of weariness under his eyes.

"The richest thing," he said, shrugging with a laugh that was half a groan, "is being charged interest on the money they owe us."

"We are free," said Joyce calmly. "Free of institutions. Now you can really work."

"We'll picket the Sunday School," said the preacher.

XI

Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell? Therefore, behold, I send unto you prophets and wise men, and scribes: some of them shall ye kill and crucify; and some of them ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city.—MATTHEW

Philosophers have only explained the world in various ways. The task is to change it.—MARX

AT THIS time a great movement of the people was stirring into life, over in the eastern part of Arkansas, in the Mississippi River bottomlands where cotton covered all the fertile earth and ruled over it.

Claude heard Henretta McGhee, a powerful Negro sharecropper woman with gray hair and sad eyes, tell of the movement's birth at a meeting near Little Rock, using the symbolism that came naturally to the lips of her oppressed people:

"This was the way it was. We've done made our crop for the year an' it's the time when ol' boss-man he won't give us no more furnish, and our people is all in debt an' won't have nothin' till pickin' time. It's the time when we has to go out lookin' for hickor' nuts an' berries an' garbage an' jest anythin' that'll go in our bellies.

"We goes to muddin' in the bottom, down in the crick there, an' catch fish with our hands ef we can. Ridin'-boss he comes down on his horse an' he sits there laughin' to split his sides. He's laughin' like all hell at us hungry folks up to our hips in mud, scramblin' after fish. It's good sport to ridin'-boss.

"So one day we been there a long time, an' we's all hungry like we was holler inside an' we hasn't caught nothin'. There's a big crowd of us, all there together muddin', an' boss-man he's laughin' his head off.

"Then suddenly we all leans down together an' we got somethin'—somethin' with the union label on the bottom of it. We all comes up together with it an' holds it up high, an' when boss-man he sees what it is, he cries out: 'Jesus Christ God Damn!' "

The thing the people had brought up together out of the mud was the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. It was the first organized voice that the black and white people, the millions of slaves of King Cotton, had ever had together, though it was not the first stand made in that section against the monopolies that sought to strangle the people's source of livelihood. As far back as 1882 the Wheel and Alliance, which was to draw in millions of Southern farm people to fight the monopolies of that day and out of which was to come the Populist Revolt, had been founded by seven Arkansas farmers in a log cabin in Prairie County.

The Southern Tenant Farmers Union was born because it had to be born. The task of organizing the landless farm workers of two races could not have been undertaken from outside. Scattered over a vast area, the people were illiterate and often too poor to pay even a few cents of dues money. The blacks and whites were almost equally divided and no human force from outside could have broken down the deep old heritage of race antagonism. The voice that spoke to them through those of their own people who came forward to lead them was the voice of that God in whom all had faith; the God of Moses and the prophets, crying: "Let my people go!"

It was born when and where it was because it had to be. The years since the great crisis had seen farm-owners

driven down by tens of thousands into the renter-sharecropper class, and in Arkansas sixtythree out of every hundred people were now dependent on sharecropping and day labor. There were some ten million people in the South raising cotton, and to have the barest decency of life they lacked eight million cotton mattresses, thirtytwo million cotton sheets, sixteen million cotton pillowslips, thirtyseven million dish towels, diapers and handkerchiefs, eighteen million cotton overalls, twentytwo million cotton sweaters, eight million Sunday suits and dresses, nine million cotton cloaks and overcoats, thirty-six million pairs of cotton socks and stockings, fiftytwo million cotton drawers and undershirts, fortyone million cotton blankets and bedspreads, sixty million pairs of curtains, twentyeight million reserve suits and dresses, and three million cotton carpets. They also lacked vegetables, eggs and pork, which they could have raised themselves had they not been forced to grow cotton to the very doors of their shacks. But the market for cotton was so bad that most of the money the plantations were getting was a payment from the Government for plowing the crop back into the ground. It was a curious way of keeping people alive, but it would have been easier to take if those who raised the crop had received the money for destroying it. What was really happening was that the landlords, who received the money, kept most or all of it, instead of dividing it as they were supposed to do with their tenants.

The answer would have been a mass union even though the plantation workers had had skins of fifty different colors.

Twentyseven white and black sharecroppers had started the union in July, meeting secretly at night in a decaying schoolhouse near Tyronza in Poinsett County. Since first they got wind of it, the planters had fought the

union with violence and terror. Union meetings were held in the woods and fields after dark, and at first every member came armed. Sharecroppers and preachers of great courage went on foot through the country, traveling mostly by night, sleeping under trees, to set up locals of the union. They had no money and did not know who were their friends. A mile away from their own parish they were "outside agitators" to all landlords and their allies, just as the Wheel and Alliance organizers were in their day, and their lives were unsafe.

Membership of the union had mounted into the hundreds and quickly into the thousands. It gave the people a faith and a hope for a better life, not perhaps for themselves, but at least for their children.

It was a religious revolutionary movement with a significance and spirit that fired men like the Paris preacher, who in his own district had already laid foundations for such a union. A few days after his trial in Paris for doubting the Virgin Birth, news came that Rodgers and a Commonwealth group were in jail at Lepanto, a town not many miles from the cradle of the union. Rodgers had spoken against the planters' terror in a union meeting at Marked Tree, had read part of the United States Constitution dealing with freedom of assembly, and had been arrested for anarchy and blasphemy. Lucien Koch, Atley Delaney, Leon Webb and Bob Reed of Commonwealth had held an STFU meeting at Gilmore, the first attempt by anyone to reach into Crittenden, the county most noted for the planters' savagery. At Gilmore they had been beaten, kicked and threatened with a lynch-rope by drunken deputy sheriffs, then they had gone on to the Marked Tree meeting and been thrown into jail with Rodgers. They were still alive because they were the kind of outside agitators who apparently had influential friends. The Commonwealth people had finally been

released after Koch and Reed were fined fifty dollars each, but a kangaroo court of planters had convicted Rodgers.

Alarm began to spread through the whole American labor movement, north and east and west. Tales of violence done against union organizers in the cotton belt were being reported almost every day. A widening circle in New York and the great industrial centers realized that it was not necessary to look across the ocean to see fascist terror in action. In Germany and Italy the clock of progress had been violently put back, but in the Southern States of America it was already half a century slow; conditions for terror did not have to be created, because they had been there, though dormant in less critical times, ever since the Ku Klux Klan first rode. People who had seen only picturesque quaintness in Dixie took down their history books and then looked again. They saw the threat of the still semifeudal condition in the South to the living standard which workers had won by struggle in the North and West. The whole social structure was beginning to be infected. Northern industries were flocking southward like the carpetbaggers after the Civil War, attracted by the chance to cut their payrolls and their risk of labor trouble. Southern Chambers of Commerce were brazenly advertising these attractions. "Our workers," they boasted, "are not prone to organize in respect of wages and conditions."

It had become the vital interest of the whole labor movement that the coolies of the South should organize to better themselves. Those who understood this went quickly into action, calling a great conference in New York on the rise of fascism and terror in the South.

Claude was delegated to the conference by miners, sharecroppers and unemployed of western Arkansas, and the Conference of Younger Churchmen agreed to pay his fare. His lawyers said it would be all right for him to be

away two or three weeks; further eviction proceedings could be staved off that long.

His first activity in New York was to speak twice in behalf of Ward Rodgers. He stirred up a tide of indignation at the things that were going on under the American flag. A great mass protest meeting was planned.

The visit to New York was stimulating to him although he worried some about how the family was making out. Joyce wrote that Zelphia Mae, who had been turned out of her father's home by the old Southern method of sending the maid to her with a note on a tray, was in New York. Claude found her scrubbing commodes with serene cheerfulness to make a living. She was a real fighter and an asset to the Southern labor movement, and he managed to arrange for her to go and take a course at Highlander Folk School, a school not unlike Commonwealth that had been started in Tennessee.

The precious days in New York had to be used to make long-needed contacts with national progressive leaders, to tell them about the South's problems, to enlist their interest in his work. He was the guest of the Union Theological Seminary, a place long familiar to him in name as center of the new radical Christian teaching under such men as Harry F. Ward and Reinhold Niebuhr. To the students at the seminary he found himself to be something of a hero. Many of these had outstripped their teachers in prophetic religion and were ready to go out and preach an uncompromising revolutionary gospel after the model of the Nazarene.

His contacts with some of the Christian Liberals and Socialists whose writings had changed his approach to religion were disappointing; for while he, in the thick of the class struggle, had been steadily driven forward and leftward, they in the sheltered arcades of endowed seminaries and churches had stood still or fallen back.

He heard Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick preach in his million-dollar church on Riverside Drive on the subject: Can we be Christians in our society? The answer Fosdick gave was yes. There was much talk about the hard life of the cotton-growers in the South, the preacher said; he was deeply distressed about it as everyone else was, but certainly an Arkansas tenant-farmer girl could have a spiritual victory. It was really a good sermon considering the possibilities existing in such a congregation, but Claude had come straight from medieval Arkansas, and the atmosphere of wealth, comfort and complacency in the church suddenly closed in on him and he had to rush out into the fresh air. It was Fosdick's book that, long before the great crisis threw society's structural decay into relief, had had perhaps the most profound effect in revealing to him the fallacy of the fundamentalists. He watched the wealthy church members roll away with happy little smiles to Sunday dinner, then he headed downtown in a state of desperation.

He visited with Winifred Chappell and had a session with Dr. Harry Ward, Methodist chairman of the League against War and Fascism. Next day he saw Norman Thomas, leader of the Socialists, and Earl Browder, general secretary of the Communist Party. Browder gave him twenty dollars toward his fare back to Paris.

"I've been accused for a long time of getting Moscow gold," Claude said. "How many roubles is twenty bucks?"

Browder laughed a noisy Kansan laugh and said that, unfortunately for the American Communists' work, what money passed across the Atlantic went entirely the other way. Though most of the American leadership worked for almost nothing, and he himself received thirtyfive dollars a week, the Party was rich by comparison with many in Europe, where it was illegal. All the Communist money that crossed the Atlantic was dollars.

When Claude considered the progressive leaders he had met he realized that those who had impressed him most were either Communists or were accused of being such. The brand was on everyone who really came to grips with the struggle, in New York as in Arkansas. There were more Methodists with the brand on them than any other Church group, which showed the Methodists were nearest to realistic Christianity, with the Congregationalists coming next. After a chat with Dr. Warren Wilson, his former chief, who was kind and tolerant but firmly astride the fence in the class struggle, he was left with no hope for his own reinstatement and little for the Presbyterian hierarchy as a really significant factor. Wilson said:

"I accept you as one of the highest types of Christian. You ought to get into the Congregational Church."

It seemed to be an admission that there was no room in the Presbyterian Church for Christians.

Yet in every Church there were honest, fearless, realistic groups. Much publicity had been given to an interview with Claude on his arrival in New York, in which he had said: "I was fired for taking religion seriously." It was a challenge to professing Christians, and Church periodicals were taking it up, discussing the basic problem of Christianity's social task. In the magazine *Presbyterian Tribune*, representing the progressive group in Claude's Church, it was urged that he be given financial help and that the General Assembly reconsider his case very seriously.

"In a very real way," the magazine declared, "Mr. Williams has not been on trial, but Paris, and Arkansas—nay, our whole land and the whole Presbyterian Church—has been on trial."

He left New York with the satisfaction of knowing he had started a fire which the smug hierarchies would have

no easy job putting out. He did not accuse the hierarchies of unchristian intentions. They thought they were working for Christ, but as custodians of vast property, with the propertied class chiefly maintaining them, they were victims of forces more powerful than themselves; so that in a crisis they took refuge in a neutrality which in effect was an alliance with property against humanity. He had spent an illuminating hour in the Public Library looking up the figures. The wealth of the Christian Churches of America amounted to seven billion dollars, or half as much again as the total value of public school property in the country. With investments of hundreds of millions of dollars, the Churches had a huge stake in the profit system. The Congregational Church alone paid its ministers out of profits from the Fifth Avenue Bank, American Telephone and Telegraph, General Electric, fiftyfour railroads, fortythree public utility companies, and rents from great land holdings. Such was Christianity twenty centuries after the birth of its founder in a stable. The very money with which ministers were paid to preach to working people came out of the system of finance monopolies that cheated the workers of what they produced. Was it any wonder then that ministers were fond of Paul's text: "In whatever state you are, therein be content"? The newspaper report of a lecture to Harvard students by the president of the American Bar Association summed up with disarming frankness what Christian institutions had become.

"Go to church even if it is hard to take," he had advised the students. "You'll meet a lot of nice people there. It isn't so important for you to see them as for them to see you. Now that's called the church racket, but what of it, as long as you're getting business in a quiet, genteel way?"

Willard Uphaus, who had been a constant friend and

adviser in New York, traveled with Claude as far as Washington. It was a joy to find that Uphaus was now moving rapidly from his emotional liberalism towards the logical conclusion of accepting the class struggle. Claude was warmed by this strengthening of the bond between him and this most loyal, devoted and congenial ally, who in order to supply money for Claude's work and living expenses had sold his family jewelry and actually gone without food. Claude felt that they understood each other now, and he was eager to get started on the workers' education program in which the Foundation was ready to back him.

In Washington they talked with labor and relief officials of the Roosevelt Government, who were mostly sympathetic to their program and to the grievances of mine and farm workers and unemployed in the South. Claude had not realized how many New Deal leaders understood the fascist tendencies developed by the NRA and wanted to correct them. He especially took up with the Relief Administration's Negro Director the plight of the colored plantation victims. The Director had a mountain of protest letters from Arkansas Negroes. He did not have to be told that each letter represented the risk of death taken by the writer. He said that when he replied to them he wrote on plain stationery because he knew it was not healthy for a Southern Negro to receive mail from the meddling Yankee authorities.

Uphaus insisted on giving Claude five dollars so he could sleep on the train. Claude left Washington feeling good about Uphaus and about the program of the New Deal. He was satisfied that the best element in the national Government was sincerely progressive. It was a strange new feeling for him, not being agin the Government.

The first thing he found in Paris was that he had to get the family moved out of the manse at once. Further obstinacy could do no good, when there were so many vital things to fight about. There were other places to live.

He spent two days searching for another house. There were houses available, but it was evident that all the landlords had agreed not to rent to him.

He reported this back to Joyce and she said:

"Well, maybe they are more right than they or you know. Paris is no longer your parish. There's nothing tying us here. We have a bigger parish now."

Next day he borrowed a car and went with the family to Fort Smith, long a stronghold of his work. Houses were scarce there to. A friendly minister helped him, and they found a house in a pleasant district which cost thirty dollars a month. The house was big enough to be used for classes, and for accommodating visitors who might come through, as well as for a home. The owner did not seem to know who Claude was.

They paid a deposit out of the money Uphaus had advanced to get the workers' education program started. Two days later they moved from Paris.

When the truck was loaded with their simple household goods, and the manse was empty and desolate, they went into the little study and stood together there. The books were gone from the shelves and only marks on the walls showed where the furniture had been and where the pictures of Jesus, Debs and Lenin had hung. The magazine pictures of man's development from caves to the machine age, which they had pasted up as a mural, remained the only evidence of what the room had been in their life and in the life of the people of Paris. The room was sacred to them because of the discussions and conferences that had been held there, and because of the

young people, the miners and Negroes, who had come there, to work out private and group troubles.

They could not leave the mural there. They tried to peel it off, but it would not come, so they defaced it by scratching it all over with knives. Then they left in the truck for Fort Smith.

In their new home they faced life with three hungry children and four borrowed dollars. Joyce seemed happy.

"I don't know how you endure this, woman," Claude said.

She said: "I have overactive thyroids, just like you," and went to hanging the pictures.

They were not sorry they had destroyed the mural when they heard a few days later from their young banker friend in Paris, who wrote:

I met the woman who is going to live at the manse and asked her when she planned to move in. She said as soon as she could get the nude pictures off the walls.

There was no time to lose in getting the workers' education program under way. Claude spent most of a week at his typewriter, sending out announcements of his New Era School of Prophetic Religion and Social Action. There would be classes in trade union history, organization and tactics, in the Christianity of Christ, and in political and economic subjects. He wrote to everyone he could think of, South and North, who might contribute funds.

Zelphia Mae came through on her way to Highlander and stayed two or three days to help. Howard Lee, Lee Hays and some other students for the ministry from a nearby religious college visited the house secretly, and helped in the work. Purcie, a Negro girl, walked in one morning and said she wanted to work for them; Claude said he could not pay anything, and she said no matter,

and moved in to do housework. Unemployed people of Fort Smith, whose champion Claude had been for a long time, heard of his arrival and soon started coming to the house. Shabby, hungry people came and went. The preacher was their man, and now they had him there in Fort Smith. They had a hundred problems for him.

He found that he had run his head right into trouble. The unemployed were being paid so little for Government relief work that it was only a change for them from dying quickly to dying slowly. They were getting thirty cents an hour for the piddywork and averaging two or three days' work a week. Some were only doing twelve hours a week. The funds to create these jobs came from Washington, but the administration of the work was in the hands of State authorities, under a Governor who was a planter. These authorities had advised Washington that Southern workers did not need as much relief as Northern workers; they were used to wearing less and eating less. The rate of pay had to be fixed so low that it could not tempt the cotton-slaves away from the plantations. And now the miners' union contract was about to expire, and it was planned to cut their wages again; but in order to force the miners to take this cut, relief-work pay had also to be reduced. The relief workers were told they would now receive twenty instead of thirty cents an hour. It was the last straw, and they declared a strike.

Leadership of the strike was taken over by Horace Bryan, who had broken himself in health by his efforts for the miners' autonomy movement. He led demonstrations throughout the city, and one day he went to the jail to demand release of a striker who was illegally arrested. Instead of releasing the striker they locked Bryan up with him.

The relief workers begged Claude to take Bryan's

place. He told them how vital it was, if his new school was to succeed, for him to keep out of such things for a time. That day Ray Koch came into town from Commonwealth, and agreed to assume leadership. He was arrested with several local men the next day.

Fully aware how he was risking the success of his school before it had even opened, Claude could do nothing but take over the leadership. Hundreds of people were starving, and throughout the city there was a brooding tenseness. The Governor was threatening to call out the militia.

He must either take this thing on or betray not only himself but also the multitudes for whom Jesus of Nazareth stood. He could not get out of his mind the memory of that little wasted baby of a relief worker whose funeral he had preached at Paris. But before he took any active step, he decided to try and win the support of religious leaders in Fort Smith.

He did not stand so high with the Presbyterians. The nearest thing he knew to a real Christian in Fort Smith was the Rabbi Teitelbaum. The Rabbi listened sympathetically and explained that, however much he might want to help, he was a Jew and could not afford to stick his neck out alone; he would be bringing down wrath upon his whole group in town and turning the labor terror into a pogrom. He mentioned one of the Christian pastors in town and said that he would support Claude if this pastor would go along too.

They went to this pastor's church, and Claude put it to him that he should support the peaceful attempt by starving people to get the bare necessities that were denied them.

"No," said the pastor, "I can't do it, brother Williams. These people are on charity and they do not have the right to strike. The Government is doing the best it can

for them. If they were not a lot of ne'er-do-wells they would be thankful for getting what they do."

Claude learned later that some of the biggest bankers and coal-owners in Arkansas, who were directing the relief curtailment, were members of this pastor's church, so that the limits to his liberalism were clearly defined.

There was no dodging it: Claude had to go ahead alone. He had one ace in his hand. He was still officially a Governor's appointee to investigate destitution in the State.

He went to work knowing he was going into dynamite, and carried with him all the weapons he had: his Governor's mandate, his honorable discharge from the army, his First Lieutenant's commission, and his Bible. When the police shoved their way into the strike meetings at which he spoke, he showed them the document with the Governor's signature and said he was doing what he had been authorized to do. The meetings continued. Resolutions were flashed to the Washington officials with whom Claude had recently discussed the issues. The police intimidated and third-degreed the strikers, but, pending the trial of Bryan, made only one more arrest.

On the day before Bryan's trial Claude led a great hunger march through the streets of Fort Smith. Whites, Negroes, Mexicans and Indians marched behind him singing hymns. The people of property in Fort Smith watched the faces of the marchers as they went by singing, and smelled trouble. The faces of the marchers said they were hungry even more plainly than the banners they carried, but the people of property saw only a band of cutthroats menacing law and order. It looked like revolution, and the word tightened the lips and hardened the hearts of all good citizens.

The court was so jammed for the trial of Bryan that the architect of the courthouse was called in to announce

it might collapse if some people did not leave. Nobody left. Nearly all the people in the court were strikers. They sat very quiet and silent. To ease the tension the judge offered some humorous and sarcastic remarks, but nobody laughed. Sweat beaded his brow and he looked increasingly uneasy. Claude was summoned as a witness, but was put on trial as if he were accused with Bryan.

The judge seemed to feel the atmosphere was not right for passing sentence on Bryan, and the verdict was postponed over the weekend. Bryan was allowed free on bail. After the session Claude applied to the judge for permission to hold a Sunday afternoon service for the strikers there in the courthouse.

"I know it's an unusual request, Judge," he said, "but it would give these people something to do to prevent violence. It is bitter cold outside and they have nowhere else to go. It would keep the struggle on a high ethical basis."

"You can keep your struggle on a high ethical basis in the ball park," said the judge. "But I'd advise you to leave these men alone."

Claude was threatened as he left the courthouse. There had been no violence of any kind from the strikers, but the upholders of law and order were doing everything possible to incite them to it. The papers were filled with lies made up from whole cloth.

Bryan and Koch and several others spent the night at Claude's house. He could have turned the leadership back to them, but now he was in the thing, he was roused, he was going to see it through. The forces ranged against the few hundred starving people were terrifying. To have deserted the people now, when they trusted and followed him, would have been running away.

A police car full of strongarm men pulled up outside the house during the night, and some of the men came to

the door and knocked, but the bright porch-light was switched on and Horace Bryan and Claude showed themselves with their hands in their pockets as if holding guns. The strongarm men decided to drive on.

It was Sunday next day. Claude held his service in the ball park. It was not actually freezing, but the great crowd of strikers who came to worship and hear Claude preach were soon blue with cold, for they were half naked. The sheriff, mayor, and judge came with detectives and policemen and stood on the crowd's edge, snugly overcoated. The strikers, white and black and brown, prayed and sang together. The respectable ministers of Fort Smith had refused to attend the service, but five lowly lay-preachers co-operated with Claude.

A Negro preacher led the people in prayer. Claude preached on the text: "Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." He said that it was the strikers' unshaken solidarity, not the fear of violence, that was giving the respectable citizens of Fort Smith the jitters. After the service he tried to speak to the sheriff and police to make them understand the peaceful intentions of the strikers. They walked away and would not speak to him.

Next afternoon another hunger march was arranged. The strikers planned to meet for prayers in a field on the edge of the city, then march across town. In the morning the mayor sent a message that there must be no march.

There was in effect a declaration of martial law. The strikers sent word back to the mayor: "This is America. We can march. If there is any law against it, it is unconstitutional."

The mayor telephoned that gas bombs would be thrown to disperse any march, and hoses would be turned on the people. Claude replied that they would all be glad to take a bath together. The mayor said, "If

this march is attempted, there will be bloodshed. There will be murder."

Then Claude telephoned the police, telling them the route of the march and the number of marchers, and asking for protection. The mayor, he said, had threatened violence, but there would be no violence from the marchers. They intended to shed no blood.

"There isn't going to be any march," the police chief said.

"We're going to attempt it."

"And we'll attempt to break it up."

"That is probably to be expected."

The strikers assembled, and Claude spoke to them from an improvised platform, on which an American flag had been placed. He repeated that the strikers did not believe in violence, but in democracy, and merely intended to exercise their democratic rights of demonstration and petition. The march was a protest against violence: against the violent attempt to prevent them having any say in the conditions of their work and the administration of relief.

He urged on the strikers: under no circumstances, whatever might be done to them, must they let themselves be provoked. If the hose was turned on them they must walk right through it. They must not carry so much as a pocketknife.

A poor preacher led the people in prayer. As they stood with bowed heads, a line of police cars drew up. The police chief with some men charged on to the platform, pushing the prayer-leader and Claude to the ground, and knocking the flag askew.

"Watch out for that flag!" said Claude.

"To hell with the flag! It's you we want."

Joyce ran forward. "You've got to take me if you take him."

"Better go home and mind the children," Claude said.

She was roughly pushed back, and Claude, Bryan and the others were piled into a police car filled with guns and gas bombs. A policeman clutched Claude with trembling fists as if he were some dangerous criminal. Claude told him not to be so tense, saying:

"We aren't violent. We won't try anything."

The man's face went scarlet. "We know who you are," he cursed. "You ran out of Paris, and the respectable citizens of Fort Smith are going to lynch you. And, by God, they ought to."

"I don't believe it. I'm not afraid."

"I don't give a goddam whether you believe it or not. I'm not trying to scare you. I'm telling you. They're gonna do it."

Joyce came home to find policemen ransacking the house. Books and papers were littered about. The two elder children were in school, but Claudera, the youngest, was standing with her hand in Purcie's, looking puzzled and frightened. Purcie was completely calm. One of the men was questioning her, and she knew nothing. The man gave up in disgust, saying:

"The colored law will be up for you later."

The raiders were taking a particular interest in a trunk which Ward Rodgers had left there, which was full of radical literature. They had turned Claude's files inside out and had found nothing but a mass of sermon notes going right back to fundamentalist days, but in Rodgers' trunk they had found an old letter from Claude, signed: "Yours for the Revolution."

Joyce stood watching the men. They had no right at all to be there and were acting like wild bulls, all except one of them who, she thought, half-smiled at her when the others were not looking, as if to say: You're all right. Courage!

"Don't you have a dozen or two more men to send with guns to search an unarmed woman's home?" she said finally.

"Yes," said one of the men, winking at his comrades. "Seven hundred of them."

Another of the men said: "You live in a fine house here. You won't live in it long. What is your income?"

"We have none."

"Then what do you live on?"

She was about to say, "On nothing," but she said:

"Try to find out if you can."

"Well, when you see Williams again it won't be in this town."

As they were leaving, the man who had spoken first noticed that the dog had no collar on.

"Would you like to come to court for your dog or your husband?" he said with a hearty laugh. They drove away, taking with them a bundle of papers from Rodgers' trunks and a stack of Claude's sermon material.

It was true what the man had said about seven hundred more men with guns. Joyce found that seven hundred vigilantes had been organized by the defenders of order and property to smash the strike. They had taken up position at the head of Garrison Avenue, along which the strikers were to march. The vigilantes had instructions to stop the march at any cost.

In the evening the real estate agent from whom they had rented the house came by to give Joyce a month to get out.

XII

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. . . . Ye are the salt of the earth. . . . Ye are the light of the world.—MATTHEW

Had I interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends, either father, mother, sister, brother, or wife, or children, or any of that class, and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would have been all right, and every man in this court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment. . . . I am yet too young to understand that God is any respecter of persons. I believe that to have interfered as I have done, in behalf of his despised poor, was not wrong, but right.—JOHN BROWN

AT THE jail the men who had been arrested for praying on the public street to the God of the poor asked to see the warrants for their arrest. The police officials looked at them as if to warn them this was no time for the funny stuff, and put them into cells.

Claude and Bryan were in a fourteen-by-ten-foot cell with six others who had introduced themselves as they shook the preacher's hand. The boys were already used to jail routine and passed the time playing poker and talking sex. One of them had syphilis and another had gonorrhea.

In a corner was a nonflushable receptacle, encrusted and undisinfected, for the use of all the guests. Some of the bunks were bare and some had filthy, sour-smelling

pads and blankets. Lying about the floor were tin cups and spoons which, one of the boys said, were passed down through the years without cleaning. The floor was dirty and the unventilated cell was full of stifling dust.

Trying not to worry about Joyce and the family, Claude took a hand in the poker game. Bryan folded himself up quietly on his haunches against a wall.

The attorney who was to represent them came in the evening. He was scared of the case, but apparently needed the work. He said the charge against them was barratry.

"Isn't that a crime only lawyers can commit?" asked Claude.

"Preacher," said the attorney, "I think you'd better be careful. It's well enough that you're in jail. If you were not, they'd take you for a ride. I'm not trying to scare you, but I'm not sure they won't anyhow."

Later another guest arrived in the cell and reported what the boys were saying around town: that the vigils would be calling at the jail at two in the morning to take Claude and Bryan for a ride into Oklahoma.

It sounded not improbable, but there was nothing they could do about it. Bryan went back to sitting on his haunches, his face a mask. The sheriff sent in a clean pad and blanket for Claude. It was kind of the sheriff. Claude stretched out and went to sleep fairly soon.

He woke in the gray dawning and was surprised to find he was still there. Joyce was allowed to see him during the morning. She told him through the bars about the raid on the house and what the police had said. The whole city was a piece of tinder, she said, ready to flare up at the drop of a pink hat. People were acting as though possessed by devils. Because things were so tense, Howard Lee and some other boys from the College had come and spent the night on guard. Word had finally been got out to their friends in the North and locally, but they had

had a hard time getting to use a telephone. Lee Hays had tried many places, but he was known as Claude's friend and had been told in drugstores: "No friend of that damn communist can use my phone."

In the afternoon Bryan was taken to court and sentenced to six months and a \$500 fine. Then Claude and the others were called and charged with barratry, and their bail set at \$1,200 each. The judge managed to crack off several good jokes during the brief business.

Bryan was put in another cell, and Claude felt alone and depressed. Joyce had said she would be back before evening and she had not come, and he kept thinking of the way the police had threatened her. His fears for her and the children combined with the uncertainty of his own position, wondering when the vigilantes might come to take him out for a ride, made sleep impossible.

He did not doubt that if the vigilantes came for him, the jailers would yield him up without a protest. It was an old Southern custom. He was outside the pale of the law. He had challenged the top-down control of the propertied class, the same control that it sought to impose on Church and industry and courts and labor unions and every institution under the capitalist state. He had taken sides uncompromisingly with the disinherited, and it was the enemy that had all the weapons of force, while his side had nothing but their solidarity built on the frail foundation of bellies that cried out for food. So far as he was concerned the State was not an impartial thing weighing the issues, but a weapon of the class he was attacking. He had a few friends in the enemy camp, but they were weak against the blind, ruthless force of a class fighting for its life.

The dawn came gray and cold and he was still there. He had not slept at all and he felt dirty. He needed a shave, and in order to get it he had to let the jail barber

use on him the same razor he had been using on the syphilitic. He was allowed to take a bath, without any towel, in a filthy bathroom. He complained of the conditions to the sheriff, but the sheriff looked oddly at him for a minute and said he could not do anything.

The day wore on. His attorney came with Joyce and said that during the night two of the relief workers who were trying to lead the strike had been taken for a ride by masked men, and threatened with lynching. Joyce said food was scarce at home but they were getting by all right, with their friends' help. After they had gone, a jail trusty brought some cherries for Claude, saying they were a present from "the lady upstairs." He did not eat the cherries, and none of the other boys in the cell fancied them. He was the central figure of a lurid melodrama and he had to be careful.

Again he lay awake all night. The boys in the cell talked till long past midnight, mostly about sex. Two of them had an argument about some mutual friend in the underworld.

"I'll bet both eyes against your toenails," one kept saying, "he's blowed his top." They were finally quiet, and Claude lay staring at the bottom of the bunk on which lay the man with gonorrhea.

Next morning a queer character who had visited Claude in Paris, a wandering preacher named Ashland B. Jones who called himself "one of the United States' 20,000 unemployed ministers," came to the jail bringing a sack of fruit for Claude. He said he had dropped into town and, hearing of Claude's plight, had gone to a fruiterer's and asked for the fruit to be sent to the jail. The fruiterer had become violent and refused to send it. Jones said he would stay in town a few days and do anything he could for Claude. He was the only minister who had come to the jail, and he volunteered to go as Claude's

ambassador to put his case before the churchmen of the city.

The trial was set for next day, and Claude had a third sleepless night, listening to the two venereals comparing notes on women who bit, pinched and swore in the sexual climax. When he was brought into the courthouse the building was filled with a great crowd of overalled workers with dirty, weary, hungry faces. All the people who had gathered for the hunger march were there, and hundreds more. They covered the courthouse square and steps, filled the lobby and the staircase leading to the courtroom. Against the walls squatted Negroes and Indians, who had been waiting since early morning to see their preacher. The sight of the great crowd lifted Claude's spirit. The sheriff went through the press of niggers and white trash, kicking them aside to make a lane.

The courtroom was packed tight. The judge, who had a flat head and wore a red tie, sat back in his chair. Forty or fifty vigilantes were packed in on either side of him. The jurymen were hardbitten types, lean and vindictive-looking.

Right at the front Claude saw Hoyle Houser, his Paris protégé who had brought a group from Teachers College at Conway. The preacher looked about to see if any of his fellow-ministers had come, but he saw only Rabbi Teitelbaum sitting near the front. A quick look of understanding passed between him and the Rabbi, who was evidently suffering, aware of his impotence.

The court would not try the group of arrested men together. Claude was taken first. He was public enemy number one in Fort Smith.

A feeling of calm settled upon him and that queer detachable part of himself flew up into the rafters and looked down impersonally on the scene, laughing. The

trial was a buffoonery. The workers in the body of the court sat very still. The faces of the jurymen were hard like granite, except when the prosecuting attorney found some especially humorous thing to say about Claude, when they nudged one another and grinned knowingly.

Delighting in his rôle of defender of the faith against a devil in priest's clothing, the prosecuting attorney dramatized himself with shouts and stamping. There was little chance for Claude to say anything, but when he could, he answered the fantastic questions with dignity and wit.

After two or three hours of it night had fallen, and there was a recess. One of the vigilantes walked up and down many times shaking his head and staring at Claude, as if to say: We've got you where we want you now. The workers crowded past him and stood ten deep at the rail, reaching for the preacher's hand and calling out:

"Hi, preacher! Good work! Keep it up!"

Claude strolled inside the rail, shaking their hands and joking with them. Finally the judge banged his gavel and shouted humorously:

"Reverend Doctor Mister Williams! Will you set down? These people been mighty good so fur and I don't want you stirring them up!"

The trial proceeded. The prosecuting attorney came to his big scene, where he read extracts from the seditious literature found in Ward Rodgers' trunk. He took Lenin's *Imperialism*, read a few lines of it in a contemptuous voice, stumbling pointedly over unfamiliar words, then slammed the book down on the table.

"I don't understand that stuff," he said, turning to the jury as one honest Southern gentleman to twelve others. "I don't know what it means and I don't want to. It's all red to me."

His hands were jerking up and down, and Claude thought it was like an imitation of a praying mantis.

"This man is supposed to be a preacher," the prosecutor continued. "But he don't look like one of us—he don't act like one of us—he don't think like one of us—he ain't one of us. I don't know what kind of religion he's got, but thank God"—he drawled the word out in reverence to the Almighty—"thank God it's not the same kind of religion the good ministers of Fort Smith have got."

Claude saw it was useless for Howard Lee, Houser, Lee Hays and others to testify as character witnesses, which they were ready to do. Nothing they could say would have any effect since the very charge against him was buffoonery; they would only be sticking their own necks out. Since they were friends of his, they would all according to the standards of the prosecution be "aliens coming in here to stir up trouble." In deciding who was an alien in cases of this kind, the prosecution never concerned itself about such a matter as where a man lived or was born. Claude himself, it was true, had been born a whole State away from Fort Smith; but even Horace Bryan, who had actually gone to school with the prosecuting attorney in the case, had been denounced as a "foreigner."

No defense witnesses were called. The jury found him guilty of barratry in less than ten minutes. He was sentenced to ninety days and a \$100 fine.

The group of students could not restrain a groan when the sentence was passed. The judge reddened and shouted at them that they had better get out of town. Claude appealed the case and went back to jail with the sheriff. There was nothing to do but wait for his bond to be raised and accepted.

He had kept up his spirit in court, but the jail was beginning to get on his nerves. The dirt and the stink

of excrement and the talk of some of his cellmates, degraded by brutish social forces, nauseated him. The thought of his children, who might be without food and certainly were in danger, would not leave him.

During the night a mad boy in the next cell began to do some extraordinary imitations of birds and animals. The prisoners yelled at him to stop, but he persisted, and finally Claude heard the jailers go in and beat him. The mad boy was silent after that, but it was impossible to sleep. The boy's cries rang in his ears.

As he had left the courthouse he had been able to sense the tension in the crowd; he had read the vigilantes' faces and heard them muttering threats, and he knew they were liable to come any time. They might be afraid to lynch him because of the influential friends they knew he had outside the State, and because he was a minister. But if the mob frenzy were great enough, such considerations would not stop them. His life hung perhaps in a scales and it was just a question whether hysteria or caution tipped the balance.

About the extent of the hysteria it was idle to fool himself. That evening he had heard about the Reverend Jones, the wandering preacher. He had wondered why Jones did not come back again to see him, and why he had not been in the courtroom. The reason was simple. As soon as it got about that Jones had been to the jail, the mayor had called at his hotel and said that communists like him had better get out of town and do it quick. Fifteen minutes later some vigilantes had come and driven Jones out into the country. They had put a hood over his head and a rope around his neck, but Jones had shown them a letter he carried from the Governor of Georgia and they had decided to let him off with a beating. That was why Jones had not come back, but the man had guts; he had first gone to Commonwealth

and shown them his stripes, then at De Queen down the highway had given the whole story to the newspaper. And it had elicited from the mayor of Fort Smith the curious comment:

"Jones is just a big liar. I learned on good authority and positively that they didn't hurt him."

Another dawn, and Claude was still unlynched. He began to think this danger was passing and maybe soon he might be able to have some sleep. He felt quite worn out, but with that an exhilaration was growing in him, merely to know that in this corner of Arkansas he was playing his small part in the struggle for the reconstruction of society.

Mule Mullins in the next cell, a nice fellow who was in for fraud, had taught Claude and Bryan how to make finger-rings out of old tooth-brushes to pass the time. Mule was a real artist at it and sold his rings on the outside for seventyfive cents each. He demonstrated the art by reaching round the corner of the intervening wall with his hands. Bryan had taken to weaving the red star of Soviet Russia into his rings, and Claude put on his the red cross of prophetic religion. Claude found pleasant distraction in ring-making and now was becoming expert at it.

The others who had been arrested with Claude were tried that day and were released on their own undertaking not to demand food next time they were hungry. The prosecution announced in court that with the conviction of Williams justice had been satisfied.

The lawyer came and reported that every obstacle was being placed in the way of bailing Claude out. One bonding company had refused to handle the thing; another had been rejected by the court; a third said it would be against Claude's interests to be bailed out be-

cause he would only be re-arrested on another charge, or taken for a ride. The lawyer himself believed this advice to be sound, but Claude pointed out that the only people the jail protected him from were his friends. When Howard Lee and the students had come to visit him, they had been beaten off.

He slept a little that night and the next day was Sunday. The Salvation Army came and held a service in the cell corridor. Three men, an elderly woman and two girls, unhealthy-looking creatures with narrow chests and pallid faces, stood between the cells singing with intense seriousness:

In the lonely graveyard many miles away
Lies your own dear mother, mold'ring in the clay;
She is living now where pleasures never die—
If you love your mother, meet her in the sky.

She is waiting for you in that happy home:
Turn from sin's dark pathway! Do not longer roam!
Give your heart to Jesus, upward lift your eyes—
If you love your mother, meet her in the skies.

There were several more verses. The two girls cried gently as they sang, moved by their choral wrestling for the souls of these sinners who had been caught. Claude lay on his bunk looking out through the bars, resting on his elbow. He looked through the men and women singing. He thought how a beast in a zoo must feel towards its captors. He was a monkey in a cage.

He succeeded in curbing his tongue, but an old man in a dungeon along the corridor, who had not made a sound before, began to give forth great heartrending moans which rose to screams as the service proceeded. The Salvation Army went away, satisfied with duty done, but the old man continued to moan in terrible and eerie

fashion. Night came and he moaned and raved on, as though the Salvation singers had touched off some machine of his spirit which he could not control. The inmates cursed him obscenely but it made no difference. In the small hours Claude smelled smoke, and the jailer and a trusty came running, yelling that the old man had set his bunk on fire. Claude heard soft thudding blows from the old man's cell and the moans became shrieks and then subsided.

When Joyce came next day, she reported that the situation outside was more tense than ever, as a result of Reverend Jones' story which had appeared in the papers. She said that as soon as bail could be arranged, Claude would have to leave town at once. Ray Koch had left to meet a group from Commonwealth and they were all worried, having heard no news of him. No one remotely connected with the struggle of the poor was safe.

Days, nights, and days. The supply of old toothbrushes did not give out and Claude made many rings. A wire came from Zelfhia Mae and Myles Horton, director of Highlander Folk School, saying: "We are in love." Claude did not know whether it was on the level or whether it might be some kind of a code.

He learned that the old man who had been beaten was insane and that there were now eight mad people in the jail, five of whom had been picked up off the streets. He wondered what contribution this showed the economic factor to have made to their insanity. They were each in a separate dungeon, and jailers and trustees beat them with rubber hose filled with sand when they got too noisy. News traveled quickly through the jail and everyone knew what was happening in the other cells. It seemed that the old man had torn his clothes off and had been lying for five days naked on the stone floor.

Some of the boys in Claude's cell amused themselves

by the hour calling out obscenities to the old man. One night the old man got quite out of hand and screamed like some maimed animal in a trap. It was getting on everyone's nerves. The jailer came with three trustees, and the cries of the old man as they beat him into insensibility were almost beyond bearing. The boys stopped their eternal poker game and became enraged. Claude could no longer control himself, and holding the cell bars, he cried out:

"And this is called a Christian jail! Or a Christian civilization! It is like hell!"

The jailer took no notice of him. The old man was making no more noise.

When he had been there two weeks and the authorities were still making difficulties about bail, Claude decided to try and call the local ministers' hand. He was a minister officially in good standing, shut up in a cell on a technicality of the law; a mere \$1,200 bond stood in the way of his liberation; yet not one preacher of Christ in Fort Smith had so much as come to the jail. Rabbi Teitelbaum had come, he had heard, to ask whether bail had been arranged. According to Joyce, only one influential man in the Rabbi's congregation had been able to save him from violence which the citizens wanted to visit upon him for this action. Teitelbaum the Jew was risking much to act like a Christian.

Claude asked his lawyer to call the ministers to the jail to see him. None came save Hefner, who as Moderator of the Presbytery could not refuse the plain request. He was embarrassed at the meeting. He had never been inside a jail before and knew nothing of what went on. Claude asked him whether he could not help in the bonding matter without involving himself.

"I don't know," Hefner said. "There are so many angles to it. I cannot sympathize with agitators. I don't see what

they hope to accomplish, striking against the Government when they are on charity. It isn't a minister's place to lead strikes and stir up hatred. He must be a friend to all."

"But we were in prayer when they arrested us. It was not we who stirred up trouble."

"Yes . . . but it's my job to minister to all people. I can't take sides."

"But don't you see that by your very silence you *are* taking sides? Siding with wealth and property against the multitudes for whom the Nazarene stood?"

Hefner hesitated for a few moments and then said:

"Williams, I love the nigger as well as you do. But when I came here I resolved not to butt my brains out against an impossible problem."

He wanted to leave, but Claude held him by speaking at length about the whole problem with which the relief workers' strike was concerned. He explained that it was not against the Government that the people had struck, but against those men of property who had seized the Government for their own purposes and were breaking the law and the Constitution. The issues that had been raised—communism, anarchism, barratry—were fakes. There was only one issue, in Arkansas as in the whole world, and that was whether the people should rule themselves or be ruled by a minority dictatorship. The workers broke no law by striking and demonstrating, but the employers, who organized vigilantes, laughed at the law.

Hefner heard him out and went away without promising to do anything. And now it was another Sunday, and the Salvation Army troupe was back. The troupe succeeded in giving Claude a greater physical nausea in five minutes than the jail slop in his belly had been able to

do in two weeks. The leader came bustling up to the cell door and leered piously through the bars.

"Thank God for the privilege of coming to jail!" he said.

The musical number this time was "When I Take My Vacation in Heaven." It was a discordant, stringy, grating noise, and Claude wondered what kind of a God these people imagined to themselves who could take pleasure in it. The words were inconceivably fatuous.

After the singing the members of the troupe testified in turn. The girls said they were glad to be serving Jesus and were satisfied with him, and also were glad they had minds enough to believe in heaven and hell. One of the prisoners down the corridor shouted that it was lucky they were satisfied with Jesus, because it was a sure thing nobody else would have them on a dark night in a tunnel.

The very homely girl, ignoring the comment on her charms, said she was anxious to begin the vacation they had sung about. The "mother" of the troupe lectured at some length:

"Men, boys, I love your souls. Your condition is what it is because you do not worship. There are things folks worship on earth, things like lips, tobacco, rum. But it is God you should worship, turning your eyes to heaven. In him we live, move and have our being and he could snuff out your life right now if he wanted to. God sends terrible visitations upon those who turn away from him: a great flood at Galveston, an earthquake in Japan, a cyclone in Florida. But if you will be saved you will not need to fear any of these things. It is enough that Jesus died! Just think of that glorious vacation in heaven! What matter bolts and bars and earthly sorrows?"

The Army went away and the boys settled down to a poker game. They were all hungry for a woman, but the

sight of the pallid nymphs of Jesus had made everyone feel ill. They went on playing till nearly midnight to get the holiness troupe out of their hair, and at twenty matches to a nickel Claude lost a dime.

Another insane inmate was giving trouble in the jail now: a farm woman who was in a bad way physically, going through the menopause. She had started out by destroying her clothes and the cell bedding, and had been left for three nights lying on the concrete floor. She was noisy and got beaten up, but when she came to she started again. She did not get up, but just lay on the floor in her own mess making a noise.

By the eighteenth day, with his friends outside still working feverishly to bail him out, the jail was getting Claude seriously down. The noises and smells were like knives cutting deep into his brain, and he could not keep the cell walls from closing in on him to crush him; the sensation was so sharp that he almost cried out.

The obscenities and brutalities of the place seemed to be working up into a mad crescendo, like some savage symphony picking up and blending the motifs of the Salvation Army songs, the venereals' sex talk, the cries of the beaten farm woman and the old man. Here was a process of deliberate brutalization of people, of prisoners and jailers alike, and the respectable pillars of society were entirely complacent about it, entirely satisfied that the conductor of the symphony was God. The ministers of Christ could go comfortably along year after year in a place like Fort Smith, never knowing a shadow of concern about the jail because they never came there.

During one night of inferno he lay wondering whether, if those ministers could only be locked in there with him and compelled to listen and see and smell, it might shake their complacency.

The two venereals had spent the evening drawing crude pictures of homosexual and heterosexual embraces in various positions, and now were laughing about them and relating their own experiences which seemed to exaggerate their prowess. Another youth joined in to complain about his friend, with whom he had been sexually amusing himself, being moved into another cell.

"Takes a long time to work up a punk in a small town jail," the youth grumbled.

Intermittently through most of the day the old man in his dungeon had been crying out, because of the pain from a beating he had been given. His cries became more and more harrowing, and the youth whose friend had been moved called out savagely, as he might to a mule or a dog:

"Cut out that goddamned *****!"

People in other cells joined in and shouted, some at the old man, some at the youth.

"If I had my way about it," said the youth, "I'd take you out and chop your ***** off."

The old man was heard saying feebly: "Yes, that would be just like you."

Now the farm woman began to scream in her dungeon.

"Help! Help! Help!" she called many times. Then in a lower voice: "Oh God help me. I am burning up."

She seemed to have partly regained her faculties and was chafing and smarting from unremoved filth.

Fierce voices came from all over the jail:

"Goddamned old geddup *****!"

"Let me into her, I'll make her holler louder!"

"God damn it, stop that, you old whore!"

The woman still cried over and over: "Help! I am burning up!"

A trusty called out: "Burn up, you ***** old dirty hag!"

A drunk had been brought in that evening, and to add to the din he was yelling a mad song. The jailer went up finally to the woman's cell, and everyone listened to the sound of the rubber hose on her body until her shrieks died away. He came down and the drunk was still yelling. One of the boys in Claude's cell said if the drunk were put in there, they would keep him quiet. The jailer said:

"I'd rather beat hell out of him with a hose. I've been wanting to beat his ass for a year. He's always coming in here, disturbing everyone."

It was the last night of Claude's postgraduate course in the pain of the despised and rejected. They took the farm woman out on a stretcher in the morning, still unconscious. Soon afterwards Claude's bail was paid and Joyce took him home.

At nightfall Howard Lee drove him out of town and smuggled him into the College. There would have been trouble if the Director of the College had known about it, for the Director was always calling in Claude's friends among the students to try and set them right about the red preacher. His opinion was: "Certainly there is a lot of Christianity in Williams' ideas—but he is so tactless about it. Why does he have to be so tactless?"

The preacher was taken to the suite of Harry McLennan, a professor at the College. To the McLennans, as to the group of some thirty students to which Howard Lee and Lee Hays belonged, Claude was an idol. Many times there had been meetings of the group in the McLennans' suite to discuss him and his concepts. The group had been assembled in the suite for three hours, waiting for him to arrive from jail. Lucy McLennan had prepared a room for him, and during the three hours

she had been constantly going in and out of it to make sure and again sure that the bed was as soft and smooth as it could be, with the softest silk eiderdown on it, and that the bath water was just the right warmth.

When the preacher came in, very late, Lucy McLennan went to him and embraced him, too moved to speak for some moments. The students clustered around. Some homebrew had been made ready to welcome him. He drank and told about his experiences. His nerves were in a terrible state. His whole body shook as he told of the beatings in the jail. The students wept unashamedly.

Next day, after Claude had left, Lee Hays met a local minister and told him about the things Claude had described to the students. The minister said:

"You ought not to fool with a man like that. He's a hypocrite. He preaches birth control and he's got eight children and five of them have nigger blood."

Legends about the red preacher spread fast. A Paris friend of Claude's came into Fort Smith some days later. He went to see the judge who had finally allowed the bond, and asked where Claude was.

"He's gone," the judge said. "We think he ought to be in hell, but we can't do a thing to him. He's got friends all over the world. I've a stack of telegrams that high on my desk from his friends all trying to meddle in Fort Smith affairs."

XIII

And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan. . . . And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation . . . and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey. . . . Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great. . . . We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. . . . And there we saw the giants . . . and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried. . . . Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt. . . . Were it not better for us to return into Egypt?

And Joshua and Caleb, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: and they spoke saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us. . . . Only rebel ye not against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not.

But all the congregation bade stone them with stones.—BOOK OF NUMBERS

Personally, I think Moscow gold is cleaner than Wall Street gold, but I have never seen any of it, and nobody I know has ever seen it. What every devoted laborer for a new world has definitely seen has been poverty.—MICHAEL GOLD

IN THE seventy years since the Yankees attacked the slave system, the sacred rights of property had never been so threatened in the South.

Women and girls in good weathertight houses looked under their beds for bombs and niggers. Any starving man who murmured, and particularly if he had read a book or pamphlet about the causes of his woe, was an un-

American agitator. Let a Negro but glance at a white woman and she was ready to cry rape. If two or three gathered together to discuss how they might better themselves, it was bloody revolution. As one black sharecropper wrote to Claude: "My boss is Telling Some of the Croppers here on the place, that i am a Great Union Man and he is Going to Seek it up and if he find out for Show he is going to have me killed. i learnt this a few day ago. so i am a little uneasy."

The Fort Smith revolution brought the situation to a head in the State of Arkansas. For the defenders of the faith it was only a question now of finding out by just what channels the roubles were being circulated from Moscow. Nothing else could explain the agitators' behavior. Partisans of priestly religion, which sold harps and wings for cash, could not be expected to believe in the Jesus standard of conduct. For such as these the economic system, like God, was fixed within man and without. People did not do anything for nothing. Only thieves and bums lived with no assured income, waiting each day for what the morrow might bring. Certainly the starving unemployed and the sharecroppers had no money with which to pay agitators like Reed, Rodgers, Bryan, Webb and Williams. And since someone must be paying them, it could only be the Communist International. Clearly these men had been hired to work for that smashup of civilization to which Moscow was notoriously, if inexplicably, committed.

Defenders of the faith were troubled when they asked themselves: What would their forefathers, who built and molded Arkansas, think of such a condition in their State? What would Governor Jeff Davis think—that great man who according to the history used in schools had "the most brilliant political career, and the largest funeral procession, of any public man who has lived and

died in the State. . . . He was always loyal to Southern traditions and ideals. . . . He advocated Jim Crow street cars and in 1903 the General Assembly passed a law requiring street car companies to provide separate coaches for white and colored. . . . He vetoed nearly one half of the work of the 1903 legislature." Would not Jeff Davis be turning in his grave?

For the third time since its founding, official attention was turned on Commonwealth College at Mena. This place, with its suspiciously large library of books and its faculty and student body drawn from places as distant and alien as New York, seemed to be the main plaguespot from which social poison was being spread. Most of the leading agitators were or had been connected with it in one way or another. Representative Gooch of the State legislature, who now sponsored a Sedition Bill, claimed proof that there was a direct wire between Mena and Moscow. The Representative for the county in which Mena lay asserted that the sole object of Commonwealth was to tear down the American home. Other legislators brought forward accusations that free-love and nudist cults were practised at the college. There were hints of black masses and voodoo.

The State Senate committee found no basis for legislation concerning Commonwealth, but the investigation had started something that amazed Arkansas' defenders of the faith. By train, airplane and wire came an avalanche of protests from all States in the Union and from countries thousands of miles distant. One cable came from an organization representing a thousand French writers. Cultural and social leaders in Europe, of whom Arkansas had never heard and who for the most part had never before heard of Arkansas, joined in the chorus. A person might have thought that Commonwealth was the most important thing in the State. Never before in the

century of its existence had so many outsiders been simultaneously moved to meddle in the affairs of Arkansas. The defenders of the faith did not know whether to be more shocked or flattered. But they decided to proceed more cautiously.

At the same time the situation was attracting interest from red witch-hunters throughout the country. A Chicago lady whose life was dedicated to fighting the Moscow menace rushed to Little Rock with her troupe and flooded the Capitol and the city with handbills about the Red Network. The handbills said that Commonwealth was only a cog in a great conspiratorial machine whose chief engineer was President Roosevelt himself, working under direct instructions from Stalin. A national weekly magazine sent a reporter to enroll at Commonwealth and reveal the secrets of its now notorious free-love cult. The nature of his mission leaked out ahead of him by trade union grapevine and he spent only ten minutes on the campus before being escorted back to Mena station. Nevertheless his article of revelations appeared under the featured title "Rah, Rah, Russia!"

The farm people of the Mena district were bewildered. They had attended many a dance or dramatic performance at the College on Saturday nights, and had found there nothing but a simple congeniality. Now in Mena town they were entertained with hellfire sermons blasting the College as a moral leper colony. The preacher, Reverend Summers, was firmly against sin, and he knew more about it than any sinner in Arkansas. He was also resolutely opposed to the red doctrine of equality between whites and Negroes. Commonwealth students and teachers came every Sunday to his church and were fascinated by his detailed descriptions of their nudism and free-loving, of their plot to seize the government and have a good massacre.

This was the same Baptist Summers whose message had first caused Claude to hit the sawdust trail as a boy in Jonesboro, Tennessee. Reverend Summers had changed parishes a few times in those thirty years, but he had remained loyal to the God of the kiver-to-kiver Bible. The old-time religion, as his favorite hymn went, was good enough for him.

Though now he chastised with scorching phrases the lamb whom he had saved for the Lord at Jonesboro, who had slipped back into such mortal sin as acceptance of evolution and worse, he did not know the full extent of Claude's depravity. Twenty days in the Fort Smith jail, without so much as a gesture of help or sympathy from any minister, had cured Claude of his last illusions about the Church as an institution. It had nothing to do with Christianity, however much certain churchmen and groups of churchmen were striving for it. He despaired of the Church institution. If that were atheism, he was willing for Reverend Summers and his kind to make the most of it.

The realities of Church Christianity had been made manifest by a questionnaire which the Religion and Labor Foundation had been conducting among American ministers. The results showed the great gulf between theoretical and practical acceptance of a Christian social creed. Half the ministers who replied to the questionnaire were in favor of social reorganization theoretically. But not one in ten could claim to have done anything about it: to have called meetings where labor could state its case, to have helped organize unions, to have walked on a picket line of workers striking for bread and security. Less than four hundred ministers in all America reported that they had done any of these things, and nearly all of those had paid a heavy price for it. They were branded as communists. For all citizens with a

decent regard for the sacredness of property, that was enough.

To understand the nature of these witch-hunts was to know that the branded quarry was almost invariably an honest, fearless Christian. In the period of decaying capitalism the red brand, the accusation of receiving Moscow gold, was the reward of all those, whether churchmen or not, who carried the principles of Jesus through to their logical end. And for labor leaders at any rate the contrary was also true: if they were not called communists by the defenders of property, their sincerity as champions of the workers was to be doubted. They might or might not be members of the legally-recognized Communist Party. That was unimportant. The witch-hunters in any case did not know what a Communist was and did not wish to know, though a visit to a library or a few cents spent at a newsstand would have told them. The name had whiskers and was sinister. It was linked up with newspaper reports from Riga, Warsaw and Berlin about doings in Russia, where women were nationalized and babies were boiled down for soup.

It was a magic word, a word for the solace of a generation of superstitious mortals whose boast was that they had outgrown belief in ogres and bogeymen. Claude knew that there always had to be such words in time of distress, disaster or social upheaval. Reason had thus to be fought with supernaturalism as long as there were classes with opposing interests, for what was rational for one class was not rational for another. A communist in the twentieth century was like a Christian in the first three centuries, before Constantine legalized Christianity and muffled it in a jeweled robe.

The parallel was striking. The Christian movement, when it was despised and underground, had had a realistic program of change for mortal man's society. In the

second century Clement of Alexandria had presented the Christian God as determined that the use of goods should be common, while Tertullian accused all who hindered the equal distribution of goods as murderers. In the third century Cyprian had declared in behalf of the Christian commune that God's footstool, the land, was not property and could not be bought and sold; then Ambrose had reaffirmed the same doctrine, and finally Augustine had said: "They who possess surpluses possess the goods of others." For the owners of landed property and of surpluses of goods such people were atheists, enemies of the human race determined to wreck all civilization. Accused of the foulest immorality, of child-murder and even of cannibalism, the Christians were an easy group on which to pin guilt for the burning of Rome. The popular hatred of them was stirred up not on a basis of reason, but of superstition. Their revolutionary doctrine of brotherhood and community of ownership, like communism many centuries later, was too horrible for respectable people to discuss. Those suspected of holding that doctrine had to be given to the lions to be torn apart. For the Romans had asked, "What profit do they get from their religion?", and their blindness had prevented them from seeing the rational answer. So for three centuries they had fought Christianity with the weapon of superstition, until Christianity grew so big that they could only carry on the fight against its earthly Kingdom by absorbing it and pushing its Kingdom up into the sky.

Reflecting the result of the Foundation's questionnaire, the Presbyterian General Assembly dismissed Claude's last appeal on purely legalistic grounds, adding the rider:

In affirming the action of the lower judicatories in terminating a particular pastorate because of peculiar circum-

stances in that situation, the Commission calls attention to and reaffirms the declaration of recent General Assemblies regarding the application of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to social, industrial and economic conditions.

Claude had reached bedrock in his understanding of the forces involved, and any other outcome of his appeal would have surprised him. The cleavage between his position and that of the Church was now clear. The Church accepted the necessity for social change, but would not aggressively take sides in the fight to make that change. For Claude this was as unreal a position as accepting the scientific value of vaccination and refusing to see to it in a smallpox epidemic that people were vaccinated. It was an unchristian position because the prophets from Moses to Jesus had all taken sides, without compromise either in theory or in action, with the poor against wealth and wealthy institutions. While the Church dignitaries mocked Christ with their learned hairsplitting, the spirit of the Nazarene overflowed in a penciled letter Claude received from Helen, the young Negro girl in Paris:

MY DEAR FRIEND:

With very much sorrow I have heard the horrible, heart-rending news of your fate. How I longed to do something for you that would help to defend you. My God, how can such cruel beings exist as those who are against you? But my bible tells me that "whatsoever you sow, that shall you also reap." And God cannot lie. So whether or not they are punished at the present, we can be assured that they'll reap it when they least can stand it.

Oh God! Such a pity that a poor innocent man must suffer for the wrongdoing of others. Though I cannot help you in any way, you have my heartfelt sympathy. As long as there is breath in me I'll continue to pray for your success. I hope you come out more than conquered. But please let me ad-

monish you: "Put your trust in God." If he's for you, he's more than the world against you. Please don't forget just that.

Though your friends among the poor (both white and colored) cannot help, they're sorry. Mother, Dad and family is very sympathetic. That's not helping but in a way I hope it does. Maybe it'll help you to remember that you still have friends.

From now on Claude's religion was the religion of the poorest masses, of the rank and file of toilers, as expressed in such people's organizations as the Workers Alliance and the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. In these organizations the old hymns of faith were emerging with new words voicing the spirit of prophetic Christianity.

"It's a Wonderful Union," they sang now in a great chorus of hope and mass strength, "and It's Good Enough for Me." The old chant, "When the Saints Go Marching In," to the strains of which millions of children of the South had marched to revival altars for emotional conversion, had become: "When the Unions Win their Fight." The change was only superficial, for the organized people saw their Kingdom at hand on earth, and no mere symbolism of words could have put it back in the sky, where the landlords and rich folks wanted it.

Claude well knew the absurdity of the charges against Commonwealth: that it was a plaguespot from which all the revolutionary infection spread throughout the State. The plaguespot was the people's poverty and degradation, and that was not confined to any one place on the map of the South. The revolutionary movement was far bigger than Commonwealth; it was as big as all the people who depended on their toil for a livelihood, and on a small privileged group for permission to toil. But if Claude had not already seen for himself how sincere and courageous the Commonwealth program was, he would

have been able to guess it now from the source and the nature of the attacks on it.

And so, with illusions about the State and the Church behind him, unable to rent any other house in Fort Smith, he moved to Little Rock to start his New Era School as an active field program directly linked with Commonwealth. He could thus make good a vital deficiency in the Commonwealth program. The most urgent need of the hour was organization and education of the black and white races together. Commonwealth wanted to undertake this, but could not do so on the campus, for it was in a traditionally lilywhite county wherein it was suicide for a Negro even to pass the night.

When the alliance with Commonwealth was made, Claude got to talking again with Leon Webb. They agreed to disagree on terms.

"You are really talking Marxism," Webb said. "Only you make it sound like religion."

"Well," said Claude, "religion is older than Marxism—so let's say I talk religion and make it sound like Marxism."

Armed with nothing but faith, Claude set himself to an assault upon the great wall of Southern race-prejudice in the capital city of a Jim Crow State. The wall confronted him everywhere, even in the labor union movement, which had never gone beyond committing itself on paper to membership equality for white and black races.

His starting point must be with the unemployed, who in Little Rock, as in Fort Smith, were the group most desperately in need of leadership and enlightenment. Thousands were getting no relief at all and were starving. Others, on part-time relief jobs, had taken the cut from thirty to twenty cents an hour and were trying to keep a

family alive on two or three dollars a week. As usual, the Negroes got the hot end of the poker, but the difference in degree of want and despair was continually shrinking. The time was ripe for all to see the necessity of united struggle.

There were eleven million Negroes in the South, and ninetyfive per cent of them were workers, and there never had been a Negro workers' school. The State of Arkansas in its education budget only just admitted that Negroes deserved to be educated at all. In Crittenden County, a year's expenditure on the education of 10,000 Negro children was \$14,000, while for educating 3,000 white children \$108,000 was spent. For Claude, the essence of the tragedy of the South was expressed in the picture of a bus carrying white children to school, spattering mud over Negro children walking, many of them barefoot; the little Negroes gazing after the bus with wondering eyes—wondering why it was such a crime to be born of their own mothers.

In the house Claude rented as a workers' school, radical headquarters and a home for his family, the problem of achieving race unity in the unions was attacked by a committee of twentythree unemployed. Race unity was a new thing for the people in Little Rock, and as a start only two Negroes were on the committee. It was agreed that mass organization without discriminations of any kind was the last resort of the people, short of violence.

Soon after the committee began to meet, detectives were noticed watching the house. Then one day during a meeting there was a great pounding on the door, accompanied by the voice of the landlady raised in lamentation. It sounded as if the landlady had been suddenly bereaved and was unhinged by sorrow. Claude opened the door, and she stopped crying out. She glared past him

at the two Negroes sitting in the room with the ragged white people.

"Mr. Williams," she cried, "I rented you this house, but I can't have niggers coming here. I was raised to have values. My father was one of the biggest planters in the South."

The circumstance of the black men being in the house was so suspicious that she demanded immediate payment of the rent in advance. Claude wired Uphaus to send the money if possible, and a reply said the money was on the way. He showed the reply to the landlady, but it made no difference. She had already arranged to have him evicted.

The only section to which he could move was the borderline between white and colored districts of the city. He found a bungalow on such a border street, a street which had once been white, but into which Negroes had begun to move as it ran to seed. Whites lived on one side of the bungalow and Negroes on the other. He had to pay everything in advance for a month, and it took every penny he could scrape together, so that for three days there was almost nothing to eat. The family were happy together and took it philosophically. They knew they had friends. God would move for them in that mysterious old way of his.

God did, in a manner of speaking, though they had taken the hard road and the devil himself could not have made it a primrose path. The work that kept them busy all day and half the night—shaping up the school, launching a branch of the International Labor Defense, helping organize the Workers Alliance and Socialist Party and Southern Tenant Farmers Union—paid them nothing. But Claude was able to thank God for his bad state of health when the Presbyterian Church granted him a \$50-a-month disability pension. That was already far more

than the average Arkansas family had, and it was enough to provide for the children. And Uphaus, staunch champion and friend, was campaigning tirelessly for the work up in Connecticut, and sending contributions South a few dollars at a time. The American Federation of Teachers recognized Claude's outstanding quality as a teacher and union man by electing him Vice-President. When he had to go to Memphis for the AFT Convention he had only a dollar to leave with Joyce, but the grocer promised to supply her with necessities over the weekend on credit. Unfortunately the day Claude left an article appeared in the paper saying why he had had to leave Fort Smith, and when Joyce went to the store the promise of credit was forgotten. While Claude was appealing to the teachers in Memphis to forge a militant union affiliated with the broad labor movement, the family was eating as best it could on whatever twentyfive cents a day would buy. An hour after Claude got home the bungalow began to fill up with delegates to the Arkansas Socialist Party Convention, and over fifty people spent that night in the Red Hotel, sleeping all over the floor.

A thousand red preachers could not have dealt effectively with all the problems laid upon Claude's shoulders. The poor people knew of him now in every part of the State where the good news of the union had reached, and they scrawled letters to him on old torn pieces of paper, painting their distress in rude eloquent phrases and pleading for advice. He went doggedly and always good-humoredly ahead, doing all that he could do, bringing into the work young people influenced by his example who were growing up with his God.

Joyce and Claude and all of the group working with them knew well at the backs of their minds that their very lives might not be safe. But they did not weigh and consider this, because they saw the road clear and straight

ahead of them, they understood the struggle, the God of the people was on their banner and it always led them forward. There was loose in the South a terror more savage than in Reconstruction days when the Ku Klux Klan rode to beat down the freed Negroes. The Klan was riding again now and there were new forms of terror in the cotton fields. Sharecroppers known to have joined the union were being evicted wholesale, and the planters, who controlled everything, gave orders to the stores not to sell the evicted people any food. If the people stayed on the roads they were vagrants, and if they went off the roads they were trespassers. A stream of starving migrants, seeking only a piece of the earth which they might be allowed to occupy, was beginning to flow westward towards California. Others were trying to migrate north, but in Alabama planters were seen turning them back with guns.

The authorities treated every meeting of the poor as though it were a call to immediate and violent revolution. A mass demonstration of unemployed which Claude organized in Little Rock was broken up with clubs, tear-gas and machine guns before he arrived at the hall. He went with a committee to see the Chief of Police and lodge formal protest against this attack on Constitutional rights.

"Constitution or no Constitution," said the Chief, "there hain't agonna be any dictorpatiorship of the pro-laterate in Little Rock." He added in a warning tone: "Every captain of militia in Arkansas who can read has a copy of *The Red Network*."

Police raided a joint conference of Negro and white progressives in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The delegates scattered, agreed on a new meetingplace whither all would go by roundabout routes, and laid a false trail for the police to follow. The meeting reopened at High-

lander Folk School without interference while police hunted it high and low through Tennessee. When Norman Thomas, the Socialist Party's candidate for United States President, came to Arkansas to speak at a sharecroppers' mass meeting, planters broke the meeting up and ran Thomas out of the county.

In Little Rock itself the red preacher achieved quick notoriety. Revivalists, stumping more fervently than ever for the old-time religion, cried out against him as an agent of the evil one preaching the deadly Antichrist doctrine that power must come from below. A young Workers Alliance member reported to Claude that he had been at a revival meeting where the preacher had wound up an attack of this kind with the words:

"Anyone who don't like America, let him go back where he came from. Anyone wants to go to Roosia, I'll help pay their way."

Claude circulated a petition, and next night had seventytwo families signed up, all of whom wanted to go to the Soviet Union and requested the revivalist to buy their tickets. He took it to the revivalist, and the revivalist did not mention the subject again.

Six months after his departure from Paris he returned there one weekend, for the State Federation of Labor's annual convention. He went as delegate for the Workers Alliance, the mass unemployed union.

The labor tsars in control of the Federation voted to exclude the Workers Alliance and Southern Tenant Farmers Union delegates. These organizations, whose members could not pay more than ten cents a month in dues if they paid anything, had no standing with the tsars of labor. A delegate from Commonwealth and one from the Socialist Party were also excluded at the insistence of the president of the Arkansas AFL, who made

a speech denouncing radicalism and declaring the United States system and government were the best in the world. He referred to the Workers Alliance and STFU delegates as "You monkeys."

Claude took part in the convention nonetheless. When he was barred as a Workers Alliance delegate, he whipped out his credentials as a delegate from the American Federation of Teachers.

The workers of the Paris district were for him as strongly as ever, and there were many of his friends in the convention hall. He made a plea for the Workers Alliance, pointing out that the unemployed were all potential scabs and it was only good sense to try and make good union men of them. The tsars shouted him down, and one of them cried:

"Get the boxing-gloves!"

The District 21 UMW tsar orated powerfully and thumped his chest as he declared his undying loyalty to the profit system. Claude could not let pass the opportunity to say what the rank and file of miners thought of this dictator. The oration, he said, reminded him of a small boy's description of his bulldog: one per cent dog and ninety-nine per cent bull.

The Federation had a dinner that night for the delegates, and all the ministers of Paris were present. The ministers looked a little embarrassed at first when they met Claude, but when he spoke after the dinner they were powerless to resist his goodnatured charm. He said he was glad to be back in Paris: he had been run out of several towns since Paris, but he wanted to say Paris was the best darned town he was ever run out of. Everyone gave him a big hand for his speech. They all liked his show of spirit.

He visited with old friends and enemies next day, strolling into stores and offices of people who had helped

oust him, with an open, warm smile showing he bore them no malice as individuals. The gaunt old mine-owner, walking stiffly in his tailored suit and clean linen through the crowds of ill-clad miners on the courthouse square, found Claude's hand outstretched in greeting before him and was unable to avoid taking it. The preacher had a joke for everyone, and they did not know how to look at him, because his voice did not betray whether he was trying to laugh with them or at them.

Miners and Negro and poor-white farm workers greeted him with the old, singing "Hi, preacher!" To the white God-man who knew no color, black hands were held out boldly. In the pool hall and on the square the people pressed about him, and it was like the old days again. Some of the miners embraced him.

"Well, we sure raised some hell around here, didn't we?" Claude said.

"Shore 'nurf," came in chorus. "We like to 'a' tuck an' throwed them scabs down the shaft."

Said a strapping young miner with body all muscle and bone and a broad-brimmed black hat tilted back on his head: "With three hundred thousand men and the preacher to lead us, we could change the whole country."

"Shore need a lot of ammuniton, though," spoke another.

Things were not the same, all said, since the preacher left town. Many of the people had lost their spirit. Without militant leadership their physical privations began to get them down. From the faces of such people the smiles faded a few seconds after the first "Comin' along all right! The kids is fine!" In a lower key they went on:

"I tell you the truth, preacher: things is mighty hard—never was so hard."

Near the *Paris Excuse* office a graying, sinewy, quiet-

voiced Negro, a sharecropper preacher of the bottom-lands, said:

"We been starvin', an' that's the truth of it. These Negroes, they so cowered down they haven't any fight. Seems like they jest cowardly. I don't know if they's anythin' can be done. All I knowed was I wasn't goin' to let my family starve. I told the people I was goin' to take it, an' I took it. I won't starve. They's too much *here*. An' we *made* it. It belongs to us!"

Claude had taken too many knocks to let himself be discouraged. The bitterest experience of that weekend was when he had passed his old church, with the empty lot next to it on which the Proletarian Church and Labor Temple was to have stood. The massive foundations which he himself had helped lay down for the Temple were half hidden by a tangle of weeds. The great wooden cross stood askew in the middle of the lot, and the banner of hope that he had placed upon it was no longer there. He longed to come back and lead and work with these people again, for he loved them. But he knew that the road he had taken was inevitably paved with discouragement and apparent failure. For every four steps forward there had to be three steps back. The fight was always on many different fronts at the same time, and battle after battle might seem to be lost: it was only when the whole struggle was considered together that the steady, irresistible advance of the people towards their Kingdom could be seen. In the people of Paris he had helped start something that could not be crushed. Because he had lived and worked there and had stirred up the people, they could never be the same again as they were before.

"It's time all you Negroes got organized," he said. "You and the whites on the plantations together. We won't let you down, but you must fight your own battle.

One day soon I'll bring a good Negro speaker up here and we'll get these miners back of us. We'll stay a week in the bottom with you and help you some."

And the Negroes, hope shining out from their worn faces, said: "Sure would like that, brother Williams! We'd 'preciate that!"

Driving back through the cotton country, Claude stopped from time to time on the road, as was now his custom, whenever there were some poor farm people near the road in a place where they would not be seen talking to him. He asked for directions, and then got into conversation without hurry, and said who he was. The people were distant at first, muttering short replies, afraid to talk. But it was always when he said he was a minister that they began to open up. They had great faith in God and in the sincerity of those of his preachers who could identify themselves by a comradely humility of manner and speech.

A big, sad-faced Negro sharecropper shuffling along the road with his bent, prematurely-aged wife, who had a worm-eaten cabbage in her hand, said they had walked miles to find the cabbage, and it was their first food outside of hickory nuts in two days.

"Tell you the truth," he said, "we ain't livin'—jest resistin'. Jest about resistin', that's all. Always jest a bit in debt, every year a hundred or more."

"Bosses doing well, though?"

"Oh, yes, sir, that's in the nature of it. They're doin' all right. Doin' right well."

Like most of the people in unorganized districts, they had never even heard of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. They could not read. They had never been more than a few miles from where they lived, had never seen a city, not even Paris. Their only link with anything outside of the daily toil and the battle to keep alive was the

minister who told them, on Sundays, about God, who some day had a Kingdom for them.

The only way they could be reached as a group was through a minister whom they trusted. It was the name of such a minister that Claude wanted from each of the plantation people to whom he talked. He noted down the name as a potential contact for the union, and then wished them "Good day, neighbor," and went on his way.

In Little Rock Claude and Joyce and their group worked day and night to educate the people.

"Our job," Claude told his staff, "is not to teach abstractions. We must grasp the total problem of fighting oppression in the South. Here are young workers, born of squalor and reared in hunger—hopeless and discouraged. We have to show them why they are in this position, and point out their common trust with their thousands of unfortunate brothers. Then they will see how they must work together for their God-given right to freedom and equality."

The school had everything but money. The exchequer was empty. Uphaus and other friends in the North could not do miracles, and the work of organizing the school had been costly in terms of such a poverty budget. The Lord was expected to provide, but he needed powerful shoving from behind.

There was only one thing to do. Claude, whose notoriety had now spread considerably through the land, must go out on a speaking and collecting tour. His pension would feed the family. He had just enough for the bus fare to St. Louis. Beyond that, for the rest of the tour which Uphaus quickly organized for him, the Lord would have to foot the bill through the pockets of whatever audiences might come to listen.

Audiences small and great heard him speak in his di-

rect, modest, pungent way about the pain of the South and the needs of the South. Such was the barrier of the Mason and Dixon line seventy years after the Civil War that to almost every hearer the story was new and startling. Claude told them that in effect they had fascism in the United States, and if they did not want the infection to spread northward they had better isolate the germ and kill it. The people gave dimes and dollars for the work, and somehow, though part of the money had to go for his fares, he gradually accumulated a little capital for the school. He stayed at Y.M.C.A.'s or under the roof of any friend of the poor who would have him. He traveled the cheapest way, often by night, so that he did not lie down to rest between meetings in one city and the next.

Joyce wired him in Cincinnati, where the Hebrew Union College gave him shelter, that the baby had pneumonia and he might have to rush home. From the next city he talked to Joyce by phone and she said the baby was still bad. He left his purse containing twenty dollars in the phone booth, then when he got back to the hotel he found he had left in a taxi his notebook containing his itinerary, so that he did not know where he was going next. He just had to sit down and laugh. He got the purse back with the money, and in Philadelphia, terribly weary after a whole day of meetings and interviews, word came from Joyce that a friend had got the baby into the Baptist Hospital and she would probably live.

He arrived at the Union Theological Seminary in New York and sat up most of the night playing poker with the students, who had been picketing the Waldorf Astoria Hotel with the waiters who were on strike. Next morning he collapsed. The doctor said he had a nervous breakdown and must rest for several weeks.

But no rest was possible. Uphaus had arranged for him to speak twice to the prosperous congregation of Fosdick's

Riverside Church. He was deathly sick just before he was to speak, but he went ahead. He almost forgot his own condition under the stimulus of a talk with Fosdick, which cleared up the doubts he had had about his old hero on his previous New York visit. Fosdick was in no position to be a labor militant, but his church, Claude saw, was farthest from fascism of any well-to-do church he knew. Next day he spoke in Hahn's Workingman's Church at Buffalo, one of the only churches in the country that openly accepted the class struggle as a reality.

In January he came home with enough money to ensure at least a breathing-spell and a period of efficient functioning for the New Era School.

The first class as the school got fully under way had ten Negroes and nine whites. Morning and afternoon sessions began with singing of the old Southern church hymns with their new union words. In the evening, for the first time in the Jim Crow city of Little Rock, there knelt in worship of the same God more than twenty men and women of black and white races, side by side. Just before that a thickset black man, with fear and exhaustion in his face, testified about his experiences as a sharecropper. He was a man without any home place, he said, driven from county to county, otherwise he would not be there.

"I lived," he said, "on a farm in Mississippi. I worked twentyfive acres of land and I made that year ten bales of cotton.

"I was furnished fifty dollars to make this crop. That was quite some years back. So in the fall when the sharecroppers began to pick their cotton and pay out of debt, I would see the mens passing along the road by my house with a saddle on their shoulder. And I would ask them where did they get the saddle, and they would tell me You just wait and you'll see where they are coming from.

So a few days later I was notified to come up for a settlement. So the bookkeeper said to me, Well, you have did mighty well this year, old fellow. He began to figure and when he got my account figured he said All right, here is yours, and handed me thirtyfive dollars. And I asked him what he was paying for cotton and he said five cents a pound.

"Then I said, Mr. Jackson, cotton is selling ever'where else at seventeen or eighteen cents, and he said to me, That is ever'where else but that is not here. Then I said to him, I see that you have got me charged with a saddle. I have not bought no saddle. And he looked out of his window and pointed at a saddle that was hanging on the post and said, There it is. Then I said, Mr Jackson, I have no horse or mule to put that saddle on, and he said put it on your sister and ride her a while and then let her put it on you and she ride you a while, and he pitched thirty-five dollars out on the floor through the office window and told me to get out of the store and go home, finish picking my cotton, and move off his farm.

"So I did as he said, picked my last bale of cotton and carried it to the gin and sold it, and moved on another farm. But Mr Jackson told my boss that I was not no good, that I would not work. So I had to move again and I got me a job working by the day, but jest as soon as Jackson found out, why he told this boss I would steal ever'thing I could lay my hands on. So this time I moved over in Arkansas and started a crop with a renter named Jim Leslie. Jest before I got my crop laid by I went to the lot one morning and he met me at the gate and said how come you so late this morning? And I said to him, Do you call this late when the sun are not up? Then he said, Hell yes, and said, You get across this barrel. And I said No, I wont get across that barrel, you will have to put me on it. And he said, What are you doing trying to sass

me? And I said No sir, one man cant sass another man. Then he said, I bet you will get on that barrel. So he left and was gone about an hour, and when he come back he brought thirteen mens with him to put me across that barrel. But when he got back I was in the woods.”

That night before he went to bed, Claude weighed himself. The score said he had lost exactly fortyone pounds since he left Auburntown to follow the growing God.

But the school was launched, and except when he got overtired and had time to realize it, he felt fine.

Claudera, the baby, was well again. If he was very tired, Claudera noticed it first and made him lie on the couch with his head on her lap, and she stroked his brow as she had often seen her mother do.

“Daddy sleep,” she said, and he couldn’t very well not do as she asked.

XIV

And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.—BOOK OF THE ACTS

The injustices suffered by sharecroppers, the gross discrimination against Negroes . . . economic oppression of all sorts, crying court injustices, violent vigilante antics . . . go on. . . . How the Church fathers of old would have made the welkin ring with the righteous indignation of the Lord! . . . They knew of no compromise between Christ and the World.—DOM VIRGIL MICHEL

ON TWO sheets torn from a penny notebook old Jess Williams wrote with painful pencil:

Son, I dont like all this we here about you, quit that what you are doing i don't see any thing to you but rough treatment, if you keep on with all this niger buisness youre goin to be found 1 day hung on a tree with a \$5 bill pinned to your back for your burrial if lucky, and that will be the end of reverend Claude.

In the same letter Minnie Bell added a note:

Oh dear one quit that business i am praying for you to come back in ranks like you started.

It was the good old prosperous lynching days to which Jess referred. The nightriders of old had sometimes

given way to a solicitude about their victims' funeral expenses. Such sentimentalities were foreign to the captains of the new terror in King Cotton's land.

In the same mail, as in almost every day's mail, came piteous cries for help from black and white slaves on the plantations. From a Red River plantation a Negro wrote:

Dear Brother,

We are intirly to the bad. We are in a suffering condition, men with children seven to eight in family, with out food or clothes. We are tirde wearing cotton sack, flour sack. So we the people of Fulton (collored) are appealing to you. We are working men, and till the soil, and all we want is justice, but these people are far worse than Fairrow was in his day. Of corse I myself am willing to hold to the union, if possible Ill die. I loves the union better and better.

The country is in a bade shape. So if we can get your co-operation to pray that the great Supreme being will guide and lead us to the land of promise. May God bless the union.

Such letters were coming by the hundreds to the Southern Tenant Farmers Union organizers, from all the Red and Arkansas and Mississippi River bottomlands. The plantation scholars who wrote them were generally sharecropper preachers, men who toiled in the fields all week for a livelihood and on Sunday led devotions for the glory of God. They had to speak for neighbors who had never learned to read and write.

The letters were the voice of a people made desperate by injustice and want, robbed of everything but their faith: mocked by the planter-nurtured tradition of "happy nigger" and "lazy no-count white trash." They told of brazen cheating by the planters at accounting time, of eviction and violence done and threatened for complaining or joining the union, of peonage enforced at

revolver-point, of floggings and lynchings and tampering with mail. There was that courage in them that only a great faith could make possible. They said: "I do not mind giving my life for the union or the people, but do feel God would be displeased at me to give my life and family too"; "I have caught the Vision and want to help in the Fight for Righteousness;" "We are in the union for God, to live or die."

Seeing God coming at last to help his children as in the Bible story, the religious symbols on which they had been raised sprang into new life as the currency of forging a union. The praying that they asked should be done for them was more than a falling on the knees: it was direct help in the task of organizing themselves.

And so Claude gave the Fulton correspondent the desired kind of answer. He went to Fulton. A friend drove him down and dropped him off near the town at midnight. The writer of the letter, roused from sleep, walked casually down the street and back singing "Steal Away to Jesus." It was the colored people's traditional kind of signal since away back in slave days, when the singing of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" gave the sign that all was ready for runaway slaves to be smuggled on the next stage northward by the underground railroad.

One by one, neighbors slipped on silent feet into the hovel in which Claude was waiting, until some twenty were gathered. They told stories which the eloquence of their hollow faces and pitiful rags could almost have left untold in words. They were just keeping themselves alive with roots, wild greens, nuts and garbage. They had been reduced from sharecropping to dependence on day labor at forty or fifty cents a day, but most of them had had no lick of work in a long while. One man, father of four children, said his family were existing on fifty

cents a week, the wages paid to his little daughter for doing all the housework for a white family.

Claude lay low in the shack all day. When night fell again the people returned and he talked to them about how they could make their union strong in the district, so they could call a strike when God gave the word as he did to the Israelites in Egypt. He left before dawn, and was picked up by his friend at the appointed spot on the highway.

In this way news of the union was being spread through the plantations by many men and women agitators, who came and went by night and were received as messengers of a God of justice and fury. The landlords, themselves harassed from above by banks and mortgage companies which had already swallowed up a third of the South's cotton lands, saw no way of maintaining their privileges in face of this movement save by violence.

The feudal atmosphere had accustomed them to think more lightly of a black man or a poor-white than of a mule. When they found out that a tenant or day-laborer had joined the union, they, as deputy-sheriffs representing law and order, would as soon shoot him down as they would a suck-egg dog that came in their henhouse. They were not conscious of doing anything out of the way, and often boasted of it. Everyone who had anything to do with the union was a suck-egg dog to them.

A month after the union started they had beaten and jailed one of its preacher-organizers at Marion, then fired on the home of a lawyer who agreed to defend their victim in court. Then they had machine-gunned the cabins of two more preacher-organizers, wounding the daughter of one and two sons of the other. Many towns had passed ordinances barring the union from meeting within their limits, and it was even prohibited from meet-

ing in its own hall at Marked Tree, for which it paid rent. The mayor of Marked Tree saw no infringement of liberty, for he said: "Anyone can speak here if they ain't connected with that union."

As a change from beating, lynching and shooting, the guardians of law and order made one union man drink salts until he died. Many others were convicted on charges of vagrancy and made to do forced labor on farms leased by the city marshal, where men and women, young and old, were constantly beaten for not fulfilling impossible daily tasks. An attempted strike to raise cotton-picking pay from forty to seventyfive cents a hundred pounds ended in the jailing of three organizers for "agitating a strike," while the union members were forced at gun's point to pick cotton at the old rate. A hundred sharecroppers were evicted at once, in mid-winter, from a Cross County plantation for asking their landlord to settle their account. By the roadside near Parkin they put up make-shift tents to protect them from snow and wind. A stick of dynamite was thrown into the tent colony near some half-frozen children, but it did not explode. A few days after this a meeting in a church near Earle was broken up by armed deputies; for trying to make one of the deputies put his gun away, the church doorkeeper was jailed and later sentenced to seven years; for having witnessed the coldblooded shooting of two union men outside the church, Willie Hurst was murdered in his cabin by masked gunmen and buried without an inquest. Howard Kester spoke to a meeting in another church near by, and a mob broke in and attacked men, women and children with ax handles so that they jumped screaming through the windows. The church was wrecked, and a deputy told Kester that if the union continued trying to organize the people

there would be another Elaine massacre. "Only this time," he said, "we'll kill whites as well as niggers."

Churches were the focal point of the movement, and the planters burned down some, turned others into hay-barns so the people could not enter them. Religion was not doing for the planters of the South what the textbooks said it ought to do: it was not stupefying the people, but stirring them up. The Negro people especially could not be stopped by any means from worshipping their revolutionary God and meeting in his name to work out their battle strategy. If they could not meet in churches, then they met in the fields. They had always had a more mature horizontal conception of religion than the whites had. Long before the union started it had been their custom to post sentinels outside their churches when they had a meeting, and whatever might have been the nature of the meeting before, it was strictly a prayer-meeting whenever any planter looked in at the door. Now their churches were being destroyed because they stood for progress. For Claude and all progressives in the South with their eyes open, it was obvious that there was only one step from this to the destruction of all middleclass churches that did not unashamedly stand for reaction. In Germany that was already happening; it would happen in America if Church leaders did not see the danger before it was too late.

The Parkin tent colony had existed by the highway for a month, giving the wrong kind of advertisement to Cross County, when the county sheriff came at the head of a mob and gave the people fortyeight hours to get out of the county and, presumably, off the earth. The day after that Sam Franklin, a Presbyterian minister, came to investigate the situation at Parkin and was arrested and crossexamined for three hours in salty lan-

guage. On his release he was threatened, but he went to visit Willie Hurst's widow. The owner of the plantation where she lived would not allow him to speak to her, and drove him away. Franklin mentioned that he was a Presbyterian minister.

"I don't care if you're Jesus Christ," the planter said. "I've used this gun before and I'll use it again."

By May, the union had been built up in Cross, Crittenden and St. Francis Counties to a strength which seemed to make an effective strike feasible. A vote taken in these counties showed six thousand members in favor of striking and less than four hundred opposed. Recruiting to the union had been stimulated by the complete failure of Washington's Agricultural Adjustment program to improve conditions. Rich subsidies had been paid to the planters under this program to destroy their own cotton for the maintenance of profit. Lee Wilson, whose eastern Arkansas cotton plantation was the largest on earth, had received \$84,000 in 1933 and \$115,000 in 1934. Throughout the South ten million acres had been taken out of cotton production, making the services of half a million families unnecessary. The planters were supposed to share the subsidies with their tenants, so they told the people whose services they still needed that they were tenants no longer: they were day laborers at from forty to seventyfive cents a day per family when the planters could use them.

It was more than the people, who had destroyed the cotton they themselves needed so desperately could stand. Race prejudices were forgotten, and picketlines of ragged whites and Negroes, shaking with a mass fury that could no longer be held down, marched along the dirt-roads through the plantations calling on their brothers and sisters to stop chopping cotton until the

pay was raised to \$1.50 a day and the union was recognized.

As one of the first picketlines was marching, a Negro ran up and shouted:

"Halt and scatter! Boss-men coming!"

Two carloads of planter-deputies drove up, armed with guns and clubs. Two of the deputies seized Reese, a thin, snowy-haired old white sharecropper, and beat him about the legs with an ax handle and a sledgehammer. Women and children on the picketline scattered into the fields, screaming. Frank Weems, a Negro, was beaten to a pulp. Throughout the three strike counties the terror was let loose. Strikers were forced to work under cover of guns, while others were herded into a hastily prepared concentration camp. State rangers and militia, on the Governor's authority, came to harass and coerce. Lawyers sent to investigate by the union were threatened and mobbed. Trying vainly to make her tell who were leading the strike, planters whipped Eliza Nolden, an old Negro woman who was the mother of thirteen children, until they had permanently crippled her. She died of her injuries a few months later.

Sam Bennett, a fiftyfive-year-old Negro striker, saw the flogging and was threatened with the same treatment if he did not get into the field and chop cotton. He took his gun and started into the bottom; the riding-boss found him and again ordered him into the field, and he flatly refused. With a mob pursuing him he fled into the swamps toward Memphis, and reaching the city after three days, he rode the rods from there to Chicago. He was picked up there on a warrant issued by the Governor of Arkansas, charged with threatening a white man with a deadly weapon. The Governor of Illinois was going to extradite him, but Claude and Mitchell of the

Southern Tenant Farmers Union rushed to Chicago to give warning that if Bennett were sent back, he would be lynched. The Governor of Illinois reversed his decision to extradite Bennett, using it as an election campaign plank because in Illinois the Negroes had a vote and it was as good as any white man's vote. Northern democracy made the difference between life and a terrible death for Sam Bennett.

David Benson, a Workers Alliance organizer who came to help the cotton-choppers' strike, was arrested and brought before a court in Forrest City. A jury of planters from the strike area was selected by a deputy sheriff. A State ranger testified that Benson, who had driven from Washington, was arrested for having a car with a foreign license. People were not always arrested for that, the ranger said, but under the circumstances it had seemed justified.

There was no other testimony showing Benson to be guilty of any crime, but the prosecuting attorney explained this to the jury:

"These union men work under cover of night like all thieves. This bird ought to be in Russia. Birds like him should not be allowed in this country, where we have peace and quietude. He is guilty as hell. When you return a verdict of guilty you will do honor to your country."

Benson was found guilty of "interfering with labor" as well as having a car with Washington license-plates, and was fined \$1,060.

Christian progressives in New York had become so alarmed by news of the terror that the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America had sent down a representative to be present at the trial. He sat in the court next to a welldressed man, apparently a landowner of the

district. When the verdict was announced, this man said:

"Now I hope they'll try the son-of-a-bitch for murder. As a matter of fact all I wish is that they'd turn him loose. His troubles would all be over."

The Federal Council man, new to the ways of the South, said:

"I don't understand. Do you mean he'd be killed?"

"I said, just let him go loose and his troubles will all be over."

"I'm a little surprised to hear that."

"You'll be surprised at a hell of a lot of things that can happen around here if you stay around long enough."

The speaker got up and went about the courtroom, mingling with the crowd, and the people to whom he spoke looked in a strangely chilling, ominous way at the Federal Council man. Somebody offered the Federal Council man the advice that he get out of town quick for his health, and he decided to take the advice. There was an atmosphere of complete hysteria. The lawyer who had appeared for the defense only just escaped from a violent mob in the street. A novelist and a famous artist from New York were arrested for publicly talking with Negroes and workers. Clay East, a union official who had driven the lawyer over from Memphis, was beaten up in the street and arrested "for his own good."

A few days later Claude had a wire from Mitchell asking him to go to Earle in Crittenden County to conduct a funeral service for Frank Weems, the Negro who had been beaten up on the picketline. Claude was glad of any chance to be in the front lines in this fight. He was by now on the executive council of the STFU and was its ace troubleshooter. The president of the union had said of him: "He can organize more sharecroppers in ten days than I can in three months."

He gave some thought to the arrangement and content of the service he would conduct. At any time he found funeral sermons the most difficult of tasks; nobody, he sometimes said, had preached a good funeral yet. For this sermon he selected as text a passage from the fifth chapter of James:

Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

The assignment was the strangest one the preacher had ever had, because, while all the people declared Weems had been beaten to death, there was no body. His body had been left on the porch of his house. From there it had disappeared.

It was the day before the proposed funeral, and the body was still missing. Claude was willing to conduct a service without any burial, but he had to make sure that Weems was really dead. He decided to go to Earle that very day to try and confirm the death. Willie Sue Blagden, a girl of a wellknown and respectable Memphis family who had taken up social work after a course of study at Commonwealth, wanted to go with him. She understood the possible danger, and he said he would be glad of her company.

There was high tension at Earle, and they searched about with the greatest caution for Weems' wife. They picked up a young union member named Roy whom

Claude knew, and Roy tried to help them. They had no success, and after a while Roy left them. They drove some miles out of Earle along the highway and spoke to a passing Negro, who told them of a store on the edge of town where they might get some information. They went back to the store, and had just stopped in front of it when six men drove up in a car, got out and walked over.

"Who are you?" one of the men asked. "And what's your business here?"

Claude told them his name, saying he had come to inquire about Weems, because if Weems was not dead, there would be no service the next day.

The man said: "Take 'em out." One of his companions got in the back seat of the car and the others stood on the runningboards. The man beside Claude told him to drive straight ahead. Claude drove about three miles to where a dirt-road forked off to the left over a wooden bridge. He was told to stop, and then the men started to ask more questions. They said it was ridiculous that a white man and woman would drive a hundred and fifty miles to attend a nigger's funeral. They searched Claude's brief case and found his minister's license, some teachers' petitions, and bulletins of the Religion and Labor Foundation. They said all these were just a blind and everything Claude said was a lie.

One of them said: "Don't you know it's not customary for a white man to go preachin' at a nigger's funeral in the South?"

"Yes," Claude said.

"Then why do you do it?"

"The Christian religion does not discriminate."

"Well, by God, we do."

Five men took Claude through a barbwire fence and

down about twentyfive feet from the road, while the other remained with the girl. A man went off and came back with a thick leather strap. It was the backband of a mule's harness, with loops at each end, one of which had been removed. The other loop made a handhold. The man who took the strap, passing the loop over his hand, said:

"We've used it before for this, but we're going to give you more with it than we gave the others. Get down on the ground."

"I know I'm in your power," Claude said, "and you can do anything you please with me."

Another man shoved him to the ground on his back, and almost as he fell he got the first lick with the strap. Somebody ordered him to turn over on his face, and he did so. He could stand the first three licks fairly well, but then he began to squirm, and cried out, "Oh!" A man held each of his arms and legs. Between licks they kept asking him who the girl with him was, and he said he did not know. Then they asked him who the boy was who had been seen riding with them in the car. Between each question he got a violent lick with the strap. He said he thought the boy's name was Joe, but he was not sure. He did not count how many licks he received, but it must have been about twenty. The man wielding the strap was breathing heavily. They asked Claude whether he could identify the boy if he saw him again, and he said he thought he could.

"Well, we'll give you a chance."

He was hardly conscious, but his whole body was a terrible pain. The men helped him to his feet and brushed the dirt off his suit.

"How many of you want some of the girl's butt?" one of them said.

They all nodded.

Willie Sue Blagden had heard the single cry from Claude and had sat in the car counting the cracks, which sounded each one like a tree falling. The men returned to the car with Claude and one of them said to her:

"Now it's your turn."

Their Southern chivalry did not desert them, and they carefully separated the strands of the barbwire fence so that she could get through without tearing her dress. Then they trod down the stubble of the field so that she would not tear her stockings walking to the flogging-place.

They told her to lie on the ground, but she would not. The man with the strap lifted it high and cracked it down over her thighs.

"Where were you born?" he asked.

"Memphis."

"You're a liar. We know who you are."

Again he brought the strap down, and again with all his strength. The men shouted at her to give the names of union organizers in Earle. She said nothing, and with a last violent blow with the mule's harness they desisted.

The two agitators were taken back to Earle and the girl was put on a Memphis-bound bus. The men drove Claude around trying to find Roy and get Claude to identify him. They got tired of this, but held Claude until nearly midnight while they discussed among each other whether it would be advisable to kill him. He was in great pain. In the end the men drove with him to the county line on the main Memphis-Little Rock highway. In the light of the car lamps they made him write out and sign a voluntary statement that he had not been hurt and had not been forced to make the statement. Then they told him to leave Crittenden County and never

come back. It was great agony for him to drive the car and his head was bursting. His heart seemed to be wavering and missing beats. He reached Little Rock at two in the morning.

Joyce had expected him to be away several days in the field.

"What are you doing home at this time of the week?" she said as she opened the door.

She could hardly see his face in the dimness. He walked past her and stood inside, his body drooping, with one arm on the mantel.

"Oh, they've put off the funeral," he said.

Seeing that something was wrong, she said nothing, but came over calmly and put her arm around him.

"I want to undress now," he said, "so you can tell me what they've done to me."

His whole back was like a jelly. He did not say much more, because quite soon he lost consciousness.

In defense of their property privileges, Arkansas planters had trampled on every article of the Bill of Rights. They had enslaved, beaten and murdered more people than they cared to count. They had beaten white men before. They had beaten preachers before. They had beaten women before. But a white preacher and a white woman together was something new.

The preacher was a red and an ex-jailbird, but the woman was a woman of The Quality. The four licks on her thigh with a mule-harness, that June afternoon of the Lord's year 1936, were a serious tactical blunder, because her connections, her record and her sex made it possible for her to raise an effective clamor. Every newspaper in America headlined the story next morning. Crittenden County and the State of Arkansas blinked under the glare of what the *Arkansas Gazette* called

"painfully deplorable publicity." It was especially deplorable, the *Gazette* pointed out, because 1936 was Arkansas' Centennial year, in which it had "prepared to welcome tens of thousands of people coming into the State." And the whole unpleasantness was due to "an invasion of alien agitators and trouble-makers." The paper concluded:

Even though cotton-growers in some parts of Eastern Arkansas have been harassed and exasperated by agitators and their gratuitous provocations, it must be apparent to all that this deplorable situation cannot be suffered to continue indefinitely. Arkansas must not be indefinitely subjected to the consequences of these unfortunate conditions.

For some time the Governor of Arkansas had been in the habit of wildly spurting tobacco juice about the Capitol building when the very word "sharecropper" was mentioned. Now he went into conference with the sheriff of Crittenden County, and the only evidence of what passed between them was a rush order from the Capitol for huge extra consignments of cleaning soap. To reporters the sheriff said:

"We've been pretty busy, as yesterday was the last day to pay poll-taxes over here. But there just isn't any strike in Crittenden County. There never has been a strike, and all eastern Arkansas needs is a little rain."

The Governor said:

"The whole business was trumped up by Mitchell as propaganda. The Southern Tenant Farmers Union is rotten to the core. It's all right for them to organize, but not to come into our State to incite riots. These union organizers are bilking the people of eastern Arkansas out of their money and are not interested in helping them as they claim. I made a personal investigation of the East Arkansas situation several months ago, and

the controversy is much ado about nothing. Agitators are responsible for the current troubles. Why, I have chopped cotton many a day myself for fifty cents and dinner without complaining."

The editor of the *Earle Enterprise* won the sarcastic congratulations of Yankee commentators by writing:

Outside agitators have felt the sting of the backband where it would do most good. There is no sharecroppers' strike at Earle. Labor is plentiful at 75 cents a day and planters and tenants will harvest their crop and make money if they are left unmolested by those who should be home attending to their own business. The sting of the backband has produced results where all other methods have failed.

The greatest hue and cry arises from the fact that a white woman was forced to endure a light whipping. It is hard to condone the action. At the same time there is no doubt but what the woman was completely out of her place. Assisting in conducting a negro funeral is no job for a white woman in the south.

XV

And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.—LUKE

All that serves Labor serves the nation. All that harms Labor is treason to America. No line can be drawn between these two. If any man tells you he loves America yet hates Labor, he is a liar. If any man tells you he trusts America yet he fears Labor, he is a fool. There is no America without Labor, and to fleece the one is to rob the other.—ABRAHAM LINCOLN

NO NEWSPAPER south of the Mason and Dixon line expressed any sympathy for the red preacher. His record showed him not to be deserving of any, even if he had not beaten himself up, as was hinted, for the publicity. Editors did not have to consider the opinions of the plantation masses, Claude's friends for whom he had suffered. These people had only two uses for newspapers, and in only one of those were they very effective. Residents in cabins in the cotton stuck newspapers over the cracks in the walls to reduce the draft, and took them out into the fields with them in the early morning.

Because of his strangely overdeveloped thyroids, Claude had asked for trouble, and perhaps he had got less than he asked for and was lucky to be alive. In the war he had joined, quarter was not often given to people on his side who stuck their necks out too far.

Realistic as he was about the war, mindful as he had

long been of the possibility, even the probability, of physical violence being done upon him, the thing itself when it came was none the less a shock. His raw, battered flesh took weeks to heal up. The internal and nervous injury was probably permanent. But the bodily pain passed after a while; the wound to the spirit left a scar.

It was one thing to know in theory how near the surface of the apparently civilized world savagery lurked. It was something else to be suddenly brought into the terrible naked presence of it, to see the God in men stripped clean off, even understanding as he did that what drove men into this frenzy were forces of darkness outside individual control. He did not wish to dramatize himself unduly in this situation, nor to play the role of martyr in his own mirror, but he did feel that now for the first time he completely understood the Nazarene's words: "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." He was conscious that only a few years back he had believed the same things that the men who beat him believed; they thought it was their religious duty they were doing.

A crucifixion, even in a small way, was necessary for full awareness of the nature of evil and the individual man's frailty against it. If the road ran forward, the cross could not be dodged, nor its eternal lesson. When Claudera knew what the planters had done to her daddy, she was going to shove their teeth down their throats, and Claude himself would not have minded a chance to meet them on equal terms and knock their blocks off. He intended to go back into Crittenden County at the earliest useful opportunity. But he did not bear the men a personal grudge; his hatred was aimed at something far bigger than them. He knew that people acted so at a certain stage of their social development, which shaped

their individual development, whether it might be in the South or in England or in Africa. Such occurrences were inevitable steps everywhere on the road from imposed top-down control to democracy. That the beast lurked in man it would be stupid to deny. The beast might take centuries of a new kind of society to destroy; meanwhile it could only be held in leash by carrying on the fight against those social forces that brought it to the surface.

Only outside the South was it possible to view the Earle incident dispassionately. A single Memphis paper, because it was owned by a liberal Northern publishing chain, tried to consider some of the social implications. The *Press-Scimitar* commented:

We recognize the right of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union to function, as long as they stay within the Constitution. So far, we see no evidence that they have done anything unconstitutional.

But we do not agree with the philosophy of the organizers of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. It is apparent that they subscribe to the Marxian philosophy, and we do not.

Now we do not think that an American should get a stroke of apoplexy when Marxism is mentioned. But we do believe we have something better to turn to as a remedy for our troubles that will suit us better than Marxism. That thing is the original ideals on which this country was founded: equality of opportunity, co-operation, the widespread ownership of property, and the freedom of the individual. We have departed so far from that ideal that most people don't own anything at all; we can and should make our ideal a reality. Everyone should own individual property and share actually and effectively in the ownership of property too large for individual ownership.

We believe that the solution for Southern farm problems lies in the ownership of the soil by the men who work it. We believe that the best plan of ownership is individual hold-

ings so laid out that co-operative efforts between the individual farmers will be practical.

The present policy of the authorities in Eastern Arkansas only tends to increase the agitation.

Every time an agitator is assaulted, another agitator is attracted in.

Let no one make the mistake of thinking that the radicals are publicity seekers or people looking for soft jobs. There may be a few of these, but very few. Most of them want nothing for themselves, but are willing to suffer fearlessly for their cause. Persecution will not stamp them out; it only makes them increase.

One unquestionable good that the Southern Tenant Farmers Union has done is to attract national attention to the sharecropper problem. Only through such national attention and sympathy can the South get the large federal appropriations that will be necessary to buy lands to sell to tenants.

We believe that planters who are just, wise and patient with their tenants and employees will not have any serious difficulties even though those tenants and employees join the union.

Is it not obvious that when the planters wage a relentless war on the workers' union, they are only convincing the workers that the Marxian preaching of class war is true?

Let us preserve and realize true Americanism by practicing it. Let us be about the business of getting the land into the hands of men who work it.

The *Press-Scimitar's* lone voice represented the typical liberal delusions about Marxism, as if Marxism were a fixed dogma instead of a pair of spectacles through which to view and interpret the historical process. But the delusions were unimportant because, without knowing it, the *Press-Scimitar* demanded the very things toward which every Marxist strove: the true American democracy which, as set forth in the Declaration of Independ-

ence and restated by Abraham Lincoln, Marx himself so warmly hailed.

Considering the *Press-Scimitar* editorial, Claude realized how completely all the seeming contradictions between Christianity, Marxism and Americanism had ceased to exist for him. In Marx he had read: "Democracy is related to all other forms of state as Christianity is to all other forms of religion." And Masaryk of Czechoslovakia, inspired by the American Revolution, had said somewhere that democracy was the political form of the humane, or Christian, ideal. The simple idea expressed by Marx and Jesus and the fathers of the United States was that man, because his spirit was essentially noble and not essentially vile as Calvin insisted, could by co-operation master his material conditions and so free the fettered God within himself. Each of them had set up signposts along the road towards democracy, according to the condition in which each had found the world. The particular strategy and tactics they had prescribed for the advance out of darkness had to be considered in relation to the existing conditions for which they were prescribed. The general truths they had stated were all the same, and all eternal.

Claude did not need to label himself Christian or Marxist, because all that he had grown to be out of his physical and mental experience was expressed in the word: American. Had Jefferson and Lincoln been alive, they would surely have seen that their fluid, throbbing American ideal could only expand now in the direction of a socialist economy. That the New Deal administration in Washington, despite the real vision of some of its top men and women, intended or even desired to go on and make the necessary changes at the roots of society, seemed unlikely. But at that stage it was moving steadily in the right direction and the clear business of all who looked

forward, and who were practical enough not to cry for the moon on a dish by next week, was to co-operate with the New Deal and push it ahead. To those who objected to such co-operation on the ground that the New Deal was not committed to basic change, Claude insistently quoted the scriptures—having, as ever, a text ready for any contingency. He reminded these people that, when the Disciples asked Jesus if they should forbid the man to cast out devils in his name, Jesus said: "No. He that is not against us is with us."

In the South the first and biggest step toward establishing some limited degree of democracy could be made by attacking the poll-tax. By virtue of that tax Arkansas, for instance, had a Governor—a planter—who had been elected by a vote of some 75,000 people from a legal electorate of a million. The New Deal had shown itself ready to cross swords with those relics of Southern feudalism who acted as if the South had seceded from the Union. Men in high places in Washington were speaking strange and brave words. They were speaking of the existence of a United States Constitution and the desirability of its being enforced in the South as well as the North.

So the New Deal seemed to be ready with a supply of grease, but the wheel that wanted some of it had to squeak. This was the job for Claude and his brother agitators.

The Earle incident was an effective squeak of the wheel, and after it the plantation people did not have long to wait before President Roosevelt sent investigators to study the charges of cotton-land peonage. With the national spotlight on his State, the Governor of Arkansas set up two months later a Farm Tenancy Commission to hold public hearings. His intention to do anything about

the problem might be in doubt, but at least it was for the first time officially recognized as being a problem.

The STFU submitted to the Commission a summary of their grievances. The Arkansas newspapers, whose custom it had been to jest about the cotton peons' "alleged wrongs," were compelled to print the remarks of so respectable a witness as the lady president of the Arkansas Council of Parents and Teachers:

If you go to any part of the cotton country and ask a plantation owner what he would do if his tenants were to start and organize a union for better conditions, it would be a safe bet, nine times out of ten, that he would say: "I would take the agitators to the county line, kick them over and tell them never to come back."

I have asked that question and gotten that same reply in substance from some of the finest people in the country. It is that Bourbon spirit which has caused our State to be advertised so unfavorably all over the nation and even in foreign countries. That is the spirit which has led them to the flogging and other criminal acts which we have read about.

What gives the plantation owners such an exalted opinion of themselves, that they think they can ignore and set aside the Constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and freedom of opinion?

Every other industry in the country has had to put up with unions and collective bargaining for the protection of employees. Why should plantation owners consider themselves immune?

The Governor's hearing drew attention to two plantations near Forrest City where there was never any sort of trouble with the tenants and never a vacancy except when somebody died. The two planters, Clemens and Gill, were unorthodox enough to recognize and deal with the union. Clemens had said, "I don't know what this union is, but I used to be a union man myself when I

worked on the railroad, and if this one is like my union, it's all right." Gill had said to his tenants: "I've got hammers and I've got nails and I've got timber, and if you don't get out and use them to build you a union hall, you're not much good. I'm going to be as tough one way as some planters are the other way. If any of you aren't union members by next week, you'll have to leave." Applicants for places on Gill's plantation were still waiting for someone to die.

Thanks to the persistent hard work and struggle of agitators like Claude and of organizations like the Religion and Labor Foundation, more and more of the abuses suffered by King Cotton's slaves were being uncovered. The whole nation was aware of the sharecroppers and their problem, which was the nation's problem. Soon after the Governor's Commission hearings closed, the special agents from Washington announced they had evidence of peonage in Crittenden County and intended to act upon it. Crittenden's own Grand Jury considered the evidence and brushed it aside. But a special federal Grand Jury brought in indictments against Paul D. Peacher, City Marshal of Earle, on eight counts of "aiding and abetting in causing persons to be held as slaves." Peacher had been practising the old planter custom of getting Negro sharecroppers arrested on false charges, then making them work out their fines on his own plantation.

The indictment drowned most doubts about the New Deal. The time came to elect a new Governor in Arkansas. The New Deal openly backed Carl Bailey, who had served with Claude on the Commission investigating destitution in the State, for the Governor's office. The grip of the feudal land interests was weakened at the start by a contradiction which split the planter vote: the New Deal was not only the champion of the slaves, but also

had fathered the Agricultural Adjustment program which had paid planters millions of dollars for destroying their own crops. But the anti-New Deal candidate's defeat was assured when the white-trash of the hill country—the people whom a middle-class preacher described as “so ornery I'd just like to spit on 'em and drown 'em”—somehow scraped up poll-tax dollars and came down in battalions to vote for Bailey. A dollar was a fortune to them, but a dollar's-worth of this New Deal was the best buy they ever had. The tsars of the State Federation of Labor showed their hand by endorsing the anti-New Deal candidate, but the Federation rank and file ignored the endorsement and Bailey won. Shortly after the elections the defeated candidate, who had been Secretary of State, was indicted for fraud in office over the huge purchase of soap for the Capitol, which even the old Governor's expectoral habits could not justify.

Plantation toilers saw the tide turning at last their way, and the third winter convention of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union was held in an atmosphere of jubilation. Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture for the New Deal, sent a telegram of greeting to the convention, urging it to forward its recommendations to him. Through the new Committee for Rural and Social Planning, federal money was contributed to the convention, to board and feed the delegates for four days. With such encouragement from the highest seats of government, the delegates shed few tears over the stubborn refusal of certain labor tsars to attend. The president of the UMWA District 21 had been announced to address the convention, but he declared:

“I will have nothing to do with it until the communistic element from Commonwealth College is got rid of, and as long as the Reverend Claude Williams is

recognized. I stand a hundred per cent behind my God and my country."

Claude spoke, summing up the issues simply and forcefully, and the delegates shouted Amens of approval. After that Brother Brooking, a stately Negro of nearly seventy, led them in singing union songs and "Lead Us, Lord Jesus" and "Nearer, My God, To Thee." Newspapers reported the convention with all the patronizing sarcasm of Southern gentry towards any activities of Negroes. The fact that the Negroes had been forcibly denied educational advantages was brought out in the reports in all its whimsical humor. But the crude resolutions brought to the convention floor were the expression of the indomitable divine spirit in oppressed humanity, the will of human personality to live and grow and triumph. Negro sharecropper-students at New Era School thus summarized the people's modest aspirations:

Demand cash furnish in money, at a reasonable rate of interest. Enough to buy sufficient and holsome food, and such clothing as we need.

We demand enough to care for those who we must surport; such as our little ones, who are not able to work in the fields, and the Old people who have worked them selves down in the fields. In the past there have no considerations made of them, and in most cases they are foursted to work when they are not able to do so.

We want more consideration of our Women and children. Children must work in the fields from six years old and up, and Women must work at all kinds of labor on the farms no matter what their condition may be, there being so many conditions common to Women which should unfit them for work of any kind; and to work them on the farms, where there are no other sort of work except the most dread-fuliest sort.

We want fair contracts, and fair consideration in what ever money that the Government provides to relieve the farmers.

We want a monthly statement of our accounts, giving the items and the dates purchased, and a settlements when delivered to the place where gined or manufactured; therby, putting an end to the present rules of making us wait until the end of harvest; in which time the bad weather usually sets in, and in the most cases there are some money due us after settling with which we could buy such things as it takes to comfortly meet this bad season, but in stead of this we must get what we need in the judgment of the planters, at a price much higher than we could get it with the money, and then pay a high rate of interest.

We want a sufficient grain crop, for food for our selves and feed for our live stock, and sufficient land to raise vegetables for home use, we want a 10 hour day, and \$1.50 minimum day wage and time and half for over time.

We want to sell our cotton or produce to whom we please.

We need better school buildings. They are in most cases, old delapidated houses which have long ago been abandoned because the owner could not afford to repair them. In winter the holes which were intended for windoors must be closed; therby shutting out the light: which very nessary, because the cold must be shut out. In summer they must be opened: therby letting in all kinds of insects which agevate us from time to time. But to refuse to open them the light will become the problem, and the results of this action is serious sickness and death. The above complaints do not end this serious condition; for to get place at all are not at all time avialable. We may, or we may not find any place at all, and in so many cases we must resort to the churches, and in their sympathy they may permit us to cary on our school there if it is in agrement with the plantations interest, for in most cases the churches do not belong to the people who worship in them, they only is allowerd to hold service on the condition that they hold nothing in it that conflicts

with the interest of the plantation on which it stands. And in this case the planter is the judge, and duing cultivating and harvest seasons of the year it is always, accordant to the decision againts the interest of the plantation.

These and many more is our resolutions.

By organization, protest, sacrifice and martyrdom the sharecroppers had won a victory, made a definite step forward.

The martyrdom went on. Staunch old Henretta McGhee had written from Widener: "The Wemon was afraid to meet Because the landowner said if they was union they would have to move. and that why i had to move. they put my Husband off the Place for We Was union, but i am still wroking for the union and i going to fight untill Death." Soon afterward came news that Henretta had been arrested, severely beaten right in the courthouse, then held in peonage on a prison farm. There, in spite of her advancing years, she was being worked like a mule and constantly flogged.

But with the New Deal man in the Governor's office at Little Rock, there was a small breathingspace for some of those who had been in the forefront of the battle. In many places union meetings could now be held openly—sometimes even with the protection of State rangers sent by the Governor.

Claude was tired out. He had consciously made himself a marked man in Arkansas. Needing a little rest, his thoughts turned as of old to the Stovers and their peaceful farm over in Tennessee. He wished also to visit his parents, whom he had not seen in so long, and try to reassure them about the activities of their now notorious son. His mother had written:

Have not heard from you all in so long we are hungry to hear from you. heard a month or so ago you were in China

through paper dont no where you all are it looks like you mite write a little now I am still Bad Eyed cant Half see Cousin Frank Perry is ded it seems that dad and myself are living to long dragging about and noboddy able to even to feed us.

He put the family in the car and they went first to Martin, to the Stovers'. Fanny and Chall were overjoyed to see them, and Fanny went to killing and dressing a chicken and preparing icecream the way Claude always liked it.

There was the same humble industrious peace and speckless neatness that there had always been at the Stovers' farm. They had set themselves a goal more than thirty years before, and by struggle and sacrifice, despite all the odds against farmers since the crisis, they had finally reached it. The last payment on the mortgage was just made.

It had only been done by keeping the farm down to the limit where they could tend to it unaided. Their children were all out in the world long since. They had fine chickens, hogs and cows and fed them all from their own field of corn. They canned their own fruit and vegetables and were as near self-sufficient as possible, having just enough surplus of milk and hogs to pay off the mortgage and buy the simplest necessities. They had a radio and subscribed to a weekly magazine as well as a newspaper.

Fanny and Chall had always been exceptionally wise people. They knew what had been happening to other farmers and that they themselves would have come to the same end if they had been ambitious for anything more than self-sufficiency. Now in their latter years they still had to work as hard as ever, but it was not like work, because this was their own little farm which no man could

take from them. They were where millions of farmers of their generation had hoped in vain to arrive. A little less wisdom, a little less good fortune in a score of things, a temporary disability to either of them through accident or ill-health, and they might have lost their land to the banks and monopolies and been driven out, homeless and penniless, on the great westward trek of farmers seeking a frontier that was no longer there.

All this they understood, for they had kept their feet on the ground and had never lost touch with the savage and tragic realities of the profit-system's decaying years. Happy as they were, they knew that theirs was no solution of the national farm problem in the new mechanized age. Common sense told them of the still greater disasters in store for farm people when such inventions as the mechanical cottonpicker and chopper and hoer were perfected. Unless the land were given to the people who worked it, unless the benefits of mechanization were passed on in shorter working hours and greater consuming-power, the piling up of farmers on the human scrap-pile must go on faster and more insanely.

Their interest in Claude had not slackened and, though it had often perplexed them, they had followed his career and not lost faith in him. He was able, as they expected, to explain very simply the extravagant tales that had been circulated about him. He was the same Claude, the same passionate seeker after God, only grown bigger in the developing years of his search.

Claude ate Fanny's fried chicken and biscuits and ice-cream until he could hold no more, and there was a long evening of talk and reminiscence, sitting in the rockers in the meadow, under the great tree through which warm summer stars twinkled. Chall told a good story about a preacher-stranger who had come by the farm not long before, had looked over the place and said:

"Brother, that's a fine farm you have."

"Yes, preacher," Chall had said.

"Well, you must thank the Almighty for that."

And Chall had said: "Preacher, you just ought to have seen this piece of ground when the Almighty had it all to himself."

In the morning Claude and Joyce went over to Greenfield. Once off the concrete highway, the old familiar places looked just the same. It had been a very poor country ever since Claude remembered it, and it was very poor yet. A few people had museum Fords to go about in, others drove the lanes in archaic buggies, and the great majority had nothing and just stayed right where they were.

The track leading some miles off the road to Claude's old home was just wide enough for the car, but almost impassable after a recent summer storm. It seemed like going out of the world. The car lurched and slid down the track through the thickly-wooded foothills, and finally around a bend the house came in view. In the clearing before the house, which was sagging and moldering for lack of paint, old Jess sat in the silence on a wooden chair tipped back against a tree.

The old man stared for about a minute at the car drawn up in the lane, and did not move. Then he said in an incredulous tone:

"Get out."

He tilted the chair forward and slowly got up. At almost ninety he was still a fine figure of a man. The skin was drawn over his high cheekbones like a parchment. His hair, almost white, was still thick. His shirt, trousers and shoes were old and worn, but neat.

He advanced leaning on a stick, holding out his hand. He seemed not to be sure who it was until he was shak-

ing his son's hand, and then he knew and made the handclasp firmer and longer. He said:

"Well, howdy."

He called Claude's mother, who came running from the house. Minnie Bell was thin as a rake, with arms and legs like sticks. One glass of her spectacles was frosted to conceal an eyeless socket. She embraced Claude and Joyce. In two minutes she had caught a scraggy fowl and given it to Claude to ax its head off. She turned the other way until the fowl lay still, then went to cooking it with Joyce. Jess was already trying to stir up his favorite kind of argument with his son, about the politics of the day.

"That Roosevelt," he said aggressively, "he'll run for a third term."

"Bet you fifty cents he won't," said Claude.

"I don't want to bet no fifty cents. I want to bet fifteen dollars."

The old man reached deep into his pocket for a worn leather purse, opened the purse with shaking fingers and brought out three five-dollar bills carefully folded together. It was his first monthly payment under the New Deal's old-age pension scheme. He had had several payments since, but had obstinately refused to spend the first one. He clutched the notes tightly and looked with pugnacity at his son as if he would brain anyone with his stick who tried to take them from him.

"So you think Roosevelt's all right?" Claude laughed.

Jess went into a speech in which he surveyed Washington, Jefferson and other great Americans of history, assessed each one, then laid them all aside with scorn by comparison with the New Deal President. The speech was still going on when they went in to eat the chicken.

Claude's mother got in a word. "He's hard of hearing now except when you talk about his Roosevelt. He done

walked four miles in the pouring rain last election to vote him back in."

"Sure," said Jess, "and I'd do it again this minute. I went down there after a genuine President and I got him. He's the first President in all the United States that ever gave a copper to the poor old folks."

"I don't know nothing about politics," said Minnie Bell. "What I say is, them as don't know about politics oughtn't to vote."

"Trouble is, they do," said Claude.

"Reckon so, but they hadn't ought."

Old Jess might have been psychic, Claude thought, the way he had kept up with the main stream of national politics; although, like most citizens outside the political arena and many inside, he made the dangerous mistake of banking on individual personalities with whom issues became identified. The old man hardly ever got to see a paper, he said, and the nearest radio was a mile away. Claude asked him how he kept up.

"Jist what's here," Jess said, tapping his head. "The brain."

After dinner Claude's mother talked with him alone. She said she had been troubled by all she had heard. She had read in the paper about the beating. There had been a picture of Claude in the paper that time, but it hadn't been a bit natural.

"Son," she said gravely, putting a hand on his knee, "what do you believe?"

Claude said: "Mother, what should I believe?"

"What you was taught."

"Why, mother?"

"Because it's right."

"All right."

He could not say any more to her, and they went out to the others on the porch. Now Claude's brother Jack,

who had long since despaired of the ministry and was a locksmith in Cincinnati, appeared from down the road: he was visiting the folks for a few days. When he had greeted Claude and Joyce he asked Claude:

"Do you still believe there ain't no hell?"

"Still believe it," Claude said. If Minnie Bell heard, she made no sign.

"Well," Jack said after a little thought, "if you've lived in Arkansas all these years and still don't believe there's a hell, I kinda doubt it myself."

Claude could not resist baiting the old man in a good-humored way. He shifted the conversation to Negroes, wondering what would be Jess' attitude towards them now that they were no longer identified with the Dam-republicans but were on the side of the Democratic New Deal.

Jess took the bait.

"Niggers are human jist like the rest of us," he said. "You've got to respect them for their intelligence and the way they've progressed. Now mind you, ef anyone wants to set down to table with a nigger that's his business, but was a nigger to set down with me they'd one of us have to move. I do say this: Christ he died a scandalous ridic'lous death on the cross and the fourth day he riz. He didn't do that jist for white folks or jist for black folks but for ever'one."

The day wore on and various neighbors, hearing Claude was there, came by to speak howdy and hope he and his family were all gaily. Nearly all said "Get out!" when they first saw him, it had been so long. They had read about him and were impressed by his getting in the papers: they seemed hardly to have noticed what it was that put him there. They spoke of the poverty and hardship they had undergone since the crisis. One old man talked sadly of his cow, which gave too much milk for the

coffee and not enough for bread. He had traded her off for another one which didn't have but three squirts of milk, and two of them weren't long enough to reach the bucket.

Tolly Feathereston, the community simpleton, came by with a bucket to draw water from the Williams' well. He drew his water, mumbling that he'd done draw his back plain sore. Then as he was leaving he found himself facing Claude and looked at him with his little blinking eyes.

"D'you know who I am?" Claude said. "You don't remember me, I don't guess."

Tolly jerked a finger at Jess and sniggered, pleased with himself.

"You're this old man's boy. Well, you ain't no young feller no longer no way."

Jess' boy left in the evening with his mother's blessing. She could not understand what he was about in his work, but she said she would always believe in him and pray for him.

Old Jess had had a great day arguing with his son, disagreeing violently on almost everything. Minnie Bell laughed about it and said never fear, the very next day he'd be using all of Claude's ideas and arguing for them just as heartily, like they were his own.

In one of the neighboring towns Andrew Tree, an old Bethel classmate of Claude's, was Cumberland Presbyterian pastor. Claude recalled many a lively discussion with him in the old days at Bethel. Andrew had always seemed to have the most open and honest mind of any of the students. Claude wondered where that mind would have arrived after all the years.

He found Andrew's house, and for several hours Joyce

had to sit in a corner of Andrew's porch while the two Bethel graduates dueled philosophies.

"Are you still preaching?" Andrew asked. He said he had followed Claude's adventures in the papers and, because of their old friendship, had never lost touch with him in spirit.

"Still doing it."

"Who to?"

"Negroes mostly."

"What do you preach to them?"

"The Kingdom of God on earth. I'm preaching that tomorrow to an open-air mass meeting up in Charleston, Missouri."

"Are they going to start it in Charleston?" Andrew said with wistful humor. He paused and put his hand on Claude's shoulder. "I still pray for you every night."

"You're a good man, Andrew. You ought to join the Ministers' Union."

"So the ministers too are helping stir up class war now. You know, I wish I could understand you, Claude. I know that God gave you a good heart and brain and that you have sought him courageously. I have not been without my own doubts and disturbances in these difficult times, and I have not been like an ostrich hiding my head from the battle of philosophies and isms in the world. I have even tried to study Marx, whose doctrines I hear you so much admire. And I cannot for all my soul understand how a man like you can be so misguided."

"There's horse-sense in Marx. Lenin knew a few things, too, and so did Jeremiah and Jesus. They were all big men. Whatever in them is useful and applicable to Arkansas and Tennessee and Missouri in the year of insanity 1938, I take."

"It hurts me to hear you talk so. I think what you

have gone through has warped you. One might almost think you had lost your soul—that you no longer believed in God. Man cannot live by bread alone, Claude.”

“Of course he can’t! That’s just what Marx wrote a million words to get beneath skulls like yours and mine! But show me a Christian American who vaunts his indifference to bread, and I’ll show you one who has already assured himself a life supply of cake.”

“Claude, Claude, you do not need to tell me what hypocrites many of us are. I know as well as you do that society is full of terrible wrongs. It may surprise you that I share at least part of your respect for Karl Marx and many of his disciples. As far as disinterestedness goes—the sacrifice of self for what he believed was the general good—Marx had in him the spirit of the prophets. It would be stupid to deny that these ideas have inspired people to unselfish acts. But doesn’t that only make the human tragedy greater if the ideas are wrong? How can any ends which have to be attained by violent means be right?”

“Don’t ask me. Go and ask the planters of Crittenden County.”

“But I’m not trying to make excuses for them. Any Christian must condemn what they did, and God condemns it. I go so far as to say this: there are profound changes needed in the world, and it is not wrong, it may even be a duty, for Christians to take part in a revolution towards these changes, if they can do so without violence or deceit or other unchristian conduct.”

“Good, Andrew. You go ahead on that principle and see where it takes you. I think it is fine. I only wish it told the whole story. Unfortunately it’s a beautiful illusion to which we all cling until we feel on our own backs the whip of those who don’t like our revolution.

We can't sit down and say what technique we'll use. The other fellow chooses. We'd like to have a parade with a brass band to the Capitol in Washington, and ask everyone to join, but the other fellow won't let us. No matter how hard we try to avoid violence and lies as weapons, they are used as weapons against us. I've never used violence against anyone. I'll never be on the side of those who are first to use it, and if I ever have to participate in violence it won't be against the babies. The Nazarene said it is better for a man to be sunk in the sea with a millstone around his neck than that he should be allowed to hurt a sharecropper's child."

"He also counseled to turn the other cheek."

"Kivver-to-kivver, Andrew? Just try it some time."

"Claude, listen: I admire you for your principle of putting the poor and oppressed first. It is the Christian way, and few of us put it into practice as we should. Though I have not experienced it on my body as you have, I know that violence is used by privileged people, and always has been, to grind the faces of the poor. But surely the fundamental thing that Christ died to teach us is that this violence can only be conquered by love, not by more violence? The class-war theory is basically unchristian because it denies the common bond between all humanity, which it's our duty as ministers to strengthen. Even shareholders are God's creatures, after all."

"'No man shall take the mill or the upper millstone to pledge, for he taketh to pledge a man's life.' Deuteronomy twenty-four, isn't it? As long as the tools for producing man's needs don't belong to the producers, you will have classes and a war between classes. But you'll never understand that, Andrew, until you see that while classes exist, a man can't be judged as an individual

for all his actions. I am sure that was what the Nazarene was talking about when he forgave those who nailed him to the cross because they knew not what they did."

"You are persuasive, Claude. You always were. Yet look at the terrible results. How many millions slaughtered in Russia—and for what? Merely so that the class that was bottom should move on top and oppress their old oppressors even more violently."

"No, Andrew. Not for that. For the abolition of classes which stand in the way of Christianity coming true."

"Even supposing that is so—can any end justify such means?"

"I don't know. I'm not God. I see through a pair of human eyes, and not a very fitting pair at that. But I think so. I think so because I think violence is inevitable for all time till we take such conscious—merciless, if you like—steps to end the cause of it for all time. The revolution in Russia was not violent until the upper class made it so. And I haven't forgotten a certain international violence that lasted four years and killed ten million people. The result of that for Christian advancement was nothing—less than nothing. And the Churches of Christ in every land hallowed it—the same Church that uses all its influence against the winning of the kind of war that really would end war."

"I can see the apparent logic of your position. I can't help respecting you, Claude. You have a courage which I admire and a certainty of conviction which I frankly envy. But I don't understand how you can reconcile all this with belief in God. You do believe, don't you?"

"Well, something over-developed my thyroids and made me prefer to act like a fool. Truth—nature—God: when you define them back as far as the human mind can go, you have the same thing. But when I go to do

God a favor, whatever he is, I've got to go to man. There's no other way. So I have no use for supernatural belief."

"Have you lost faith in the Creator of all things as absolute spirit and father?"

"I guess I have—I've ceased to believe in anything absolute in life: absolute God, absolute morality, absolute panaceas for the world's evils. The world changes. God changes."

"God changes?"

"Yes, God must grow as well as man. The Bible itself is a dialectical development. If we postulate the fatherhood of God, the leadership of Jesus and the progress of man onward and upward forever, then God must grow or we'll overtake him."

"I can't tell you how much this hurts me. It is blasphemy. Tell me just this: what use have you and your philosophy for religion? Has it no place?"

"Yes, it has. Men are bewildered by the unsolved mysteries of life and death, and they hunger for something fixed to believe in. Because everything in life is subject to change, they need a fixed interpretation of those changes. The prophets, if they were here now, would use the class struggle as the most effective instrument of constructive social change, and dialectics as the most accurate method of analysis. Such an interpretation gives the people faith in the certainty of the Kingdom. This kind of religion prevents materialism from becoming an end in itself: keeps us aware of the spiritual ends for which we try to master material things. It is of the highest importance."

"Claude, my whole soul tells me you are wrong."

"Andrew, my whole body and brain tell me I am right."

XVI

Can two walk together, except they be agreed?—AMOS

It is not the future of Labor that depends on Labor, but the future of the world. Who cares a rap for the future of Labor as such? No true Labor man. He knows, if his opponents do not, that what he fights for in Labor is the universal manhood of human beings.—MIDDLETON MURRY

CLAUDE was a mellow man; a man who saw God; a shepherd who had become one of the lost; a menace to society.

Despite all he had seen and experienced of his Church's failure to put theories into practice, he felt himself to be still a Presbyterian, emotionally and by conviction; just as he was still heart and soul an American, despite all the shameless trampling on the Constitution by minority groups and privileged individuals. The Presbyterians had pioneered for the democratic idea, and had helped model the Constitution. The idea was still the light of mankind. Nothing could change that.

The Church had not lived up to its own program. Towards it he had no bitterness, but, as he wrote to Presbytery officials explaining why he had not attended meetings:

I have been so busy doing what I feel the Master would have me do in behalf of the hungry, naked and sick multitudes that I have had no time to bother with the ecclesiastical machinery you brethren so efficiently and effectively run.

What he had experienced had not only deepened his conviction as to the path Christians must take, but had also developed in him a mature political understanding. More tribulations, he knew, lay ahead, not only coming from outside the movement with which he had identified himself, but also from inside it. More mistakes would constantly be made. But he believed he now had sufficient grasp of the fundamentals, of the general direction to be traveled, to recognize others' mistakes and to admit and learn from his own. And realizing how fast history was moving, how quickly the battlegrounds and the disposition of opposing forces changed, he strove for a more complete grasp of the world conflict with which his own immediate campaign was so closely related.

The world was approaching another great conflagration, another mass sacrifice of human beings on the altar of the minority owning groups' desperate determination to retain their power. The economic system of private ownership of land and tools could no longer make successful peace and its only alternative was to make war. From China to Africa, from Africa to Spain and so all over Europe the war madness spread. No part of the world could seemingly avoid it, and popular movements for justice and abundance and peace felt the violence of the approaching storm. On every hand organizations and institutions of the people, which had seemed to have a permanent and growing place, were divided on the larger outside issues and so rendered ineffectual and often smashed. Witch hunts for "un-American elements" became more violent and brazen as differences of nationality, race, color and religion were used to split and subdue the movement toward unity. Only those movements and organizations which had the widest mass base could survive.

Claude saw these things approaching, and was one of

those in the Southern Tenant Farmers Union who had early pressed for it to merge into the wider movement of the CIO's United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America. The alliance was made in spite of opposition from certain STFU leaders; but these leaders, unable to smell the direction of the wind, retained their unco-operative attitude toward the CIO. The end of it was that they were expelled from the CIO and the small remnant of the STFU which they took out with them rapidly dwindled to impotence. But before that a witch hunt had been set going against Claude and the pro-CIO faction, including such men as Owen Whitfield, Negro leader of the evicted sharecroppers' demonstration in southern Missouri; and they had been ejected from the STFU. Once again Claude was paraded in the newspapers as a Communist, and now the "Rev." before his name had grown a permanent escort of quotation marks. These internal disruptions crippled the organizing movement among sharecroppers for a long period, but when the dust finally settled, the air was clearer and brighter ahead than before. The big union was what the sharecroppers instinctively wanted, and they came flocking into it with new and deeper enthusiasm.

In 1940, soon after war had engulfed all Europe, the pressure upon Commonwealth College became too great and it was compelled to close. The college had for some sixteen years been presenting to sharecroppers, factory workers and union organizers an uncompromising picture of the class struggle. It had frankly taught the Marxist interpretation of the South's economic maladjustments, and had sent hundreds of educated leaders out into the field. Toward its last days, Claude had been appointed director of the College, and had been there with his family for almost two years trying to fit the curriculum to crisis conditions, continuing meanwhile

his missionary work in the field for God and the CIO. He himself felt that the religious approach was now more important than ever; but the attempt to synthesize this with the College's old approach was less successful than he had hoped, and a few months before the decision to close down he had resigned. Commonwealth had played its part, an important one; and not least among its latter achievements was the strengthening of Claude's work by documentation of his largely emotional attitudes, so that when he went out once more to concentrate on his educational work in the field of applied religion, he was far better equipped than formerly for it.

He now founded an organization that he called the People's Institute of Applied Religion: to bind together through religion the broadest masses of the South, black and white; to educate them by means of the Bible message in the Christian necessity of the CIO which alone could so bind them. Under the already semi-hysterical conditions of a country preparing to go to war, the religious approach to such downtrodden groups as the sharecroppers was no longer merely *a* way of reaching them; it was the only possible way. It was a time of crisis such as Jesus had lived in, and hence a time for speaking to the rural masses in their own language as they spoke it, but in parables: a double language which the poor instinctively understood but the rich did not. "I have many things to say unto you but ye cannot bear them now"; but let him hear who had ears to hear.

Under the terrific pressure of the world upheaval, strange things were happening everywhere. Movements, leaders, causes that people had placed their faith in and deified suddenly began to move in unexpected, incomprehensible directions. In the frenzied jockeying for position of mass groups, national groups, big money groups—all of which by reason of inner factionalism

were fighting on two fronts at the same time—only political expediency in pursuit of the immediate objective seemed to count. Idealists who, on the basis of abstract preconceived standards, thought they knew how a group or a leader would act under given circumstances, became bewildered and uttered lamentations of disillusionment. Thus “disillusionment” came to many great intellects concerning Russia, concerning Roosevelt, concerning John L. Lewis, concerning the Pope, concerning Hitler, concerning the presidential challenger Wendell Willkie, all of whom appeared to be compromising with their “ideals.”

Claude had committed himself to the work of educating the Southern masses through organization, and organizing them through education. And in view of all these bewilderments about leaders and movements, he felt that the most vital thing was to work out and give the people a proper appraisal of democracy and the functions and limitations of leadership in democracy. Where did divinity leave off and deity begin? How much power must leaders be given in order to function effectively, and how much control must the rank and file exercise to prevent the leaders becoming demagogues and gods? The future of people's movements depended on answering that correctly. Claude himself had always fought tendencies toward super-leadership. He had never given John L. Lewis, God or Joyce a blank check. He believed in giving a leader power and responsibility to act, but he also believed in the rank and file's responsibility to keep up with every development, to be ready with recall and replacement machinery and with committees capable of taking over.

Democracy had to be redefined, and its implications accepted. The choice that had to be made was not between “collectivism” and “the American way,” but

between militaristic collectivism and democratic collectivism.

Militaristic collectivism, efficient and ruthless, had set the pace and thrown out the challenge. America could not expect to compete with it unless it could find a quality in democratic life which was something more than mere industrial efficiency.

Support for the "Red" preacher and his People's Institute of Applied Religion came from the more uncompromising groups in all Protestant churches. So far had the reaction against supernatural religion gone among these groups in the North, that the most elaborate witchcraft and spells of Martin Dies and his committee, designed to exorcise all devilish attempts to make the Constitution work, could not prevail. The vital Christian need for Claude's work in the South was clearly seen.

Yet below the Mason and Dixon line the Terror went on, directed as always against any movement that sought to foist the letter and spirit of the Yankee Constitution upon the Southern States. Under the shadow of this Terror, isolated from his influential supporters in the Churches, he had to organize the work. But the CIO was moving south now, moving into the industrial centers of the South to insist on its right under the law to organize, and coming to stay. It was met with violence, its organizers were kicked and beaten and smashed, but it kept on moving in. First it moved into Birmingham, Alabama, then it moved into New Orleans, then it moved into Memphis, Tennessee. Its headquarters in Memphis, an old frame house and hall close by the bank of the great Mississippi River, became Claude's headquarters; his educational work became part of the CIO program. So at last the recurring sense of isolation, the terrible loneliness in the midst of terror, vanished away. The

CIO, the big union, had come to the South in force, and it was staying.

The CIO moving into Memphis was an impossibility, because Memphis was politically ruled by a local Napoleon named Ed Crump, and Ed Crump said no CIO. He said no CIO because Memphis was being held up for the whole country's admiration as an example of the efficiency of "benevolent" dictatorship; and the efficiency had as one of its basic foundations the lowest wage rates of any comparable city in America. That factor attracted new industries as bees are drawn to honey; Memphis—the wealthy class of Memphis, happy under the rule of Crump—was flourishing; and the CIO would spoil everything.

But it had been the CIO's business since its inception to achieve the impossible. Its organizers were beaten and every kind of threat was made against the workers if they joined it. But in a few months five thousand river boatmen, telegraph employees, newspaper workers, rubber and steel and cotton and flour workers had been organized into fifteen locals; more members were pouring in and other industries being opened up. The worst crime the CIO was committing, in the eyes of the rich minority whose privileges depended on race antagonism, was organizing whites and Negroes together into the same unions. Southern people had so long been fed the propaganda of "white superiority" that this was the easiest point at which the CIO could be attacked. It soon began to appear that the powers of Memphis were deliberately trying to stir up race riots. Negroes were arrested by scores for "loitering," threatened by the police with being "run out of town" and provoked on Jim Crow street cars. Policemen outside a Negro store stopped people trying to go in, and searched them. There were inflammable gases in the air in Memphis and individuals and liberal

groups began writing to Washington, demanding Federal intervention.

The work Claude had set himself now was of two kinds: on the one hand direct preaching of the realistic Christian gospel to Negro and white workers and sharecroppers, and on the other hand getting the leaders of the people, the grass-roots preachers, together and training them in the dynamic, social interpretation of the Bible. The Crumps were doing all in their power to split; Claude's whole aim was to unify.

Claude called together a group of CIO leaders, organizers and educators, and presented to them his case for the religious approach to Southern agricultural workers. He also invited some white and Negro sharecropper-preachers from various parts of the cotton belt, in order to see what effect the material would have upon them. He had by now, as a result of years of patient study, worked out his whole line in detail: he had a set of charts illustrating in simple positive manner various Bible texts directly related to present-day problems; he had outlines of many sermons to be preached with the charts, including scores of texts bearing out every point; and his own mastery of the Bible and its revelation of prophetic religion was complete.

Thus did he present it to that group of leaders in Memphis:

"Why the religious approach to organizing agricultural workers in the South? Because religion speaks a language that Southern people understand. Southern people know more about Moses and the children of Israel in bondage than about the Constitution; more about John the Baptist and Jeremiah than about Jefferson and Washington.

"Some people try to prove by the example of Russia that people's organizations and people's revolutions are

anti-religious. There are differences of opinion about Russia, but I do not think the example holds water. The Russian revolution was anti-Church. There is an essential difference between tsarist Russia and the South that we know. In Russia they had a lot of Church and not much religion. In the plantation South, because the people have no money to support ministers in the style to which they never should have become accustomed, and the Churches have no State endowment, there is a lot of religion and not much Church.

“Religion means to bind—to bind you *to* something. It has been made to bind us to the wrong things. Religion is giving the best you have to the best you know. Any force that will bind a man to the best he knows so that he will tap his veins and die with a shout of victory—so that he will throw his first child to the crocodiles—so that he will take his sons and offer them as a sacrifice, or offer the best of his flocks—that is a force to be reckoned with. And men have done such things for religion. They may often not have been right in doing them, but they have done them.

“But now we are re-defining religion. There are two kinds: priestly and prophetic.

“Religion started from fear. Man was afraid: of disease, of wild animals, of thunder and lightning, of hunger. He wanted to appease all this, to bribe it off with sacrifices. Everything that moved had a spirit in it for primitive man—the brook rippling, the tree blowing in the wind. There were many bad spirits. One night he dreamed: he got the idea that he himself was a spirit. If that is so, he said to himself, then there are good spirits.

“This was when strength alone ruled—the rule of the club. The strong man made the weaker go out and get

food for him. There was always some weakling who wanted to rule but could not do it with a club. To get people to do for him, he took the old form of religion based on fear, and, armed with it, he stood by the man with the club. He became a magician or priest. However much the strong man changed, the priest was always with him, speaking of a just heaven which had decreed the strong man's rule and the weak man's meek submission. Even if the weak man died of starvation, the priest was there to tell him not to murmur—to wait—to be patient. This can be found in the Bible in the false prophets.

"But then arises the prophetic type of religion. It begins with Abraham, who broke loose from precedent and went out seeking a new régime. It stands always against the powers that be and the false prophets. From it comes Christianity. Whenever you hear a man preach submission, you know he comes from the old type of religion based on fear, not love. So, in Egypt, the soothsayers were of course on the side of Pharaoh. But God was on the side of the people and heard their cries.

"It goes into mass action with Moses, who was a labor leader as well as a prophet. He saw the taskmaster beating a slave, and what did he do? He slew him. And did God condemn him for it? Moses organized the people in tens and fifties: he put on demonstrations. Then came the strike, called by God Almighty himself, and for the very same reasons that exist in eastern Arkansas today. He led the people to their own land, Canaan, where every man could have his forty acres and a mule. His was the broadest and most militant kind of industrial union. And because of the union's militant ideals, the misleaders of the people who were still under the influence of priestly religion red-baited the prophetic leaders, magnifying the dangers of going forward and counseling

compromise and even a return to Egypt. You see the same thing in the union movement today.

"The planters in Egypt didn't like the workers organizing, any more than the planters in Arkansas like it today. But every single thing the mass of the people have ever got since then was through organization.

"Then there was Amos. 'Do not prophesy,' they told him. 'This is the house of the Lord.' But he persisted and was banished.

"Jeremiah challenged the powers that were and was put into a well. This is the type of religion that will always identify itself with the masses and take the consequences. But he who would become a savior must first become one of the lost.

"Isaiah finally crept into a hollow log and was sawn in two. John the Baptist cried out, saying: 'If you have two coats, give one away.' He also told the soldiers to be content with what they were receiving—which has been used by our enemies to suggest that he was a man of the priestly type on the side of things-as-they-are. But of course what John meant was that the soldiers should stop sinning by taking bribes—they should live on their honestly-earned pay.

"For being a prophet John the Baptist was murdered. Jesus, who came after him, was legally lynched. He was a worker, a carpenter: he was out to do good for the multitudes. He cried against the money-changers. He said that property had no right to exist if it stood for monopoly and usury and for the miserable poverty of nine-tenths of the people. He was no sissy. He stirred up the people. When he came into Jerusalem there was the greatest mass demonstration in history up to that time. He knew what was waiting there. His disciples followed way behind. He marched determinedly towards the city, with clenched fists.

"Every one of his disciples was killed too, except one who was exiled to Patmos. Christianity had begun as an organization of workers: an organization which, if a man had no job, found one for him, and gave him tools. Because it was an organization of workers it was driven underground by the powers, by the wealthy who hated it.

"But that didn't make any difference. Even underground, nothing could stop it growing. It grew so broad, had so many members, that it had the power.

"Constantine felt it was dynamite under there. It made him uncomfortable. The only thing he could do to retain his power was to join the Christian movement and legalize it. He got on the band-wagon and then double-crossed the Christians. He was the kind of wolf-in-sheep's-clothing of whom workers should beware. Beware of demagogues with smooth tongues, of people who come down from above to lead the workers, who want to be saviors without first becoming one of the lost.

"The Church was married then to the present system: it became priestly religion again. It preached about the little personal sins, not about the big social sins. It preached pie in the sky and nothing on earth. Today it attacks short skirts, painted cheeks, cigarettes. Before Constantine it thundered its volleys upon the great crimes of society against the masses of the poor and exploited.

"So, for example, the Presbyterian Church today. It has accepted endowments and legacies from the robber barons, the money-changers and the merchants of death. Those men would not have given the endowments if it had been the religion of Jesus. They endowed missions, and brave men went out to risk their lives—for what? To clear the way for more trade, more profits.

"Prophetic religion, on the other hand, is vital and unafraid. 'I am the way, the truth and the life.' God to

man is truth. That's all we can know of him. If God is anything more than truth, I don't know anything about him. If he is anything less, I don't care anything about him.

"There are two classes and two religions—one for each class. We have allowed the owner class to take one kind of religion and give it to the people as the whole of religion. We have failed to make use of our kind of religion. Yet the Bible has as many texts for organizational speeches as it has for otherworldliness.

"We are blind and fools to fail in this, because the Lord's Prayer alone is a greater people's document than all others put together. If the Lord's Prayer were carried out in life, there would be a revolution next week that would make the Protestant Reformation look like a Quaker prayer-meeting. Religion is a dangerous and evil force or a constructive good force according to how it is used. One thing is certain—it *is* a force; and in the South, more than anywhere, it *will* be used.

"Isn't it significant that all the people who really went out in the front lines and organized the STFU were preachers or church people? And all of them were thrown out of the STFU and are now in the CIO, the big movement. Most of the effective leaders of the Abolitionist movement were preachers, too.

"The STFU threw us out because they said we were communists. Everyone is talking about communism. Well, I suggest that the United States is not about to go communist. On the other hand it *is* about to go fascist if we don't move faster than we have been.

"Communism, as I understand it, is a crushed group seeking consciously to take over. Fascism is an owning group taking advantage of ignorance and weakness to perpetuate itself by dictatorship. But what we are in-

terested in is maintaining and broadening the democracy we have.

"Two main groups in this country ought to be most interested in doing that: Labor, because it wants the right to work, organize, picket and so on; and Religion which seeks freedom of worship. And neither can get what it wants without the other. They must co-ordinate a program.

"And time is so short. We have to find a way of educating the people *quickly* in the South, which is the most vulnerable area in the country and where the vicious forces can concentrate most effectively as an opening wedge to the nation at large.

"How to do this? The South is populated mostly by hungry, illiterate farmers, day laborers and industrial workers—all divided into the two great racial groups, and one group played against the other. The approach of fascism is shown by the forces we see everywhere trying to divide and set group against group. The streamlined Ku Klux Klan tells us that 'the future of this Republic rests in the hands of native-born, white, Protestant, Gentile citizens.' It is pulling its punches some on the Catholics just now and we even know of Catholics and Masons working with the Klan. The emphasis is on the so-called racial inferiority of Negroes and Jews. Then the Catholics are setting up religious minority groups inside the trade unions, although unions should by definition be completely nonsectarian. And there is an unwholesome Negro nationalism abroad, as well as an international colored fascism. The Japanese come forward and whisper to the Negroes that the white race is a minority race, that some day the bottom rail will work on top, and that Japan will free the colored peoples from their historic enemy.

"Every attempt is being made to keep whites and

Negroes apart; but fortunately for us, both groups in the South have a religious conditioning. They both believe the Bible. There is your basis of unity.

"Now the simple 'old-time religion'—let us not evade it—has a definite anti-Semitic note. Jesus is pictured standing outside Jerusalem cursing the Jews for receiving him not. That is a lever for the fascists to use for stirring up anti-Semitism. Do not think they will not try to use anti-Semitism as a splitting weapon in the South, although we have so few Jews. Already we have rules against Jews settling in certain communities. They are supposed to be 'mysteriously' rich. But if they are rich, there is nothing mysterious about it. They are smarter merchants than the next man—sell for less—get more trade. The German people were stirred up against them on that basis and our people, both black and white, easily could be. What the fascist demagogues will never mention, of course, is that Jesus was lynched for no reason except that he was with the masses. If he had happened to be born in France or America the lynchers would have been rich Frenchmen or Americans. They were rich Jews because he happened to be born in Palestine.

"The salvation of the South lies in the grass-roots preachers, who serve the multitudes—who work during the week with the people they preach to on Sunday; who know one book, and know it well. These people in tents, in windowless churches, in deserted schoolhouses, in ruined sawmills in the woods, are speaking every Sunday to Dixie: to the people fascism must use if it is to succeed. These people will determine which way the South goes and so which way the United States goes. They are the natural leaders, the most vocal, the best speakers. Yet how much effort has labor so far made to

approach these people in terms of their religious conditioning, and make them understand?

"Examine the old-time religion of the South, the primitive faith, and see what else you have got. It has a strong puritanical element and that is a protest—a protest originally against people being left isolated by the movement to towns. Resulting from this protest, the things associated with cities take on an evil tinge. Medicine becomes sin, school becomes "worldly learning," voting is sinful, and so on. From that you get the retirement into pie-in-the-sky resignation.

"Now the great established Churches have done with these southern primitive Christians what the American Federation of Labor did with certain workers in badly-paid industries. They dismissed them because they couldn't pay dues. There was no money in operating churches in the cotton belt, and the people were left more and more to their own devices. But the Ku Klux Klan was wiser. It gave free memberships to the grass-roots preachers who ran these cotton belt churches. And the Catholics subsidize great missions to the starving sharecroppers out of the profits from rich churches. They are telling men whose whole families are rotting with pellagra to 'dedicate their suffering to Christ.'

"Make no mistake: If we don't reach the masses of the cotton belt through these grass-roots preachers, using our half, the realistic dynamic half, of religion to show the essential Christianity of the CIO, then the fascists will reach them, and supernatural religion together with race hatred and every kind of splitting movement will triumph. It is not that we should approach these preachers, these natural leaders of the people, in any spirit of smashing down the faith they already have. We can leave them right where they are in their doctrinal beliefs and *add something*. Through them, every man

must hear the democratic message in the language to which he was born. The Bible is the heritage of the Southern masses. We don't care how or where they got it: they have it. We must speak to them in that language."

When Claude had finished his presentation, the sharecropper-preachers who were present were filled with tongues. One after another leaped to his feet, led the others in singing and praying, and testified.

A white Holy Roller preacher, his voice made emotional by the sense of God's nearness, cried:

"I know that in my Father's house are many mansions. This world must be his house because he made it, and there are mansions here for all of us. How can we attain them? By unity, which brings love one to another.

"God is love, and without love no man can see the Kingdom. Someone said to me, 'Do you love the planters?' Well, I don't love the planters' ways. We are commanded to love the brethren. I believe the union is one of the greatest forces in the world as to bringing people together and Christianizing them."

He passed from testifying into prayer. "Crown us, Lord," he said in a low but intense tone, "and put us on the right hand."

A small, lithe-bodied Negro rose as the other sat down.

"I'm seeing a day I never thought to see," he said. "After listening to the informations coming, I'm spell-bound. I'm almost in spasmodic shape this morning, I tell you.

"I believe this is a Christian movement because I believe the Lord is in it. I believe God is a union brother. He created man and told him to organize. Any man who says he has the spirit of God and don't co-operate with a movement like this, he don't understand himself—he jest don't understand himself.

"What's the trouble with us, brethren? We been running our religion without any business. But Jesus showed us the first thing is business—then spiritual things. Our daily bread first.

" 'Watch and pray'—yes, that's fine, that's the truth; but we been putting the cart before the horse. We been praying all the time: ain't been watching. We want to watch and put the harness on the horse with the breeching behind, so we can go somewhere."

A tall, deep-voiced man, very black of skin, with a great bushy mustache, took the dais and led the class in extemporaneous prayer. Songs written by Claude's New Era students were sung: "Hungry, Hungry Are We," "Strange Things Happenin' in this Land," "Roll the Union On," "No More Mournin'." Claude invited another Negro to lead the last prayer to close the session.

"Holy Father," he prayed, "we thank thee for our teacher. Words fail me in my attempt, O God, but with my limited ability it is my opinion there is none that equals our Institute. Thank God for its leaders and its Christlike principles. May God enable it to continue until its aims are accomplished. Crown our teacher's head with more knowledge and wisdom, that he may instruct mens and womens in true ways to thee."

Before the preachers left to go home, Claude gave each one a set of charts and notes for sermons accompanying them. They were on fire to get back into their union locals and put what they had learned into action.

"We're going home and get to doing," said the tall preacher with the deep voice.

XVII

Hearken, my beloved brethren; did not God choose them that are poor as to the world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to them that love him?—JAMES

This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it.—ABRAHAM LINCOLN

It is a little church in the midst of cotton-fields, which stretch away off, very green, to the horizon. It is Sunday, and the people come from all about to hear the preaching and worship the God who is all they have of hope in a world of toil and hunger.

On this day, the Lord's day, what the people have of life is lived. They put on such finery as they possess and converge upon the church for all of the Summer Sunday. Beauty is as much a stranger to the people as good food, but their hunger for it is also as great, and the hunger is expressed in the gaudy hats or store-dresses that some of the women wear, for which they have sacrificed much. The clothes of all the people are scrubbed clean, but mostly they are threadbare and patched. The faces of the people are laughing, but the laughter cannot smooth over the deep creases of weariness and undernourishment.

The meeting is for the day and there is no set time of starting or ending. The people gather in groups on the bare piece of ground before the church door. Trestle

tables have been set up and some pretty young Negro girls are arranging on them pink lemonade and refreshments which they have brought. Most of the people are Negroes, for it is a Negro church; but today white preachers as well as Negro preachers are coming, and through the gathering crowd are sprinkled white sharecroppers with their families. The white and black groups mix a little at the edges, but not much.

When all the people have gathered, and the churchyard is lively with talk and laughter, and the children are tiring of chasing each other among the groups of adults, the chairman of the union local calls them inside. They stream up the wooden steps, from which several boards are missing. Loudly chattering, they take their places on the rows of scarred, backless benches facing the platform. The platform has several rickety chairs and a primitive home-made lectern on it, and immediately under it three more chairs are set behind a table, facing the body of the church. The chairman of the local and his two executive aides seat themselves on these chairs: the platform is for the visiting preachers. The chairman has a proud, sensitive face of deepest black, and sits sideways, his profile to the people, his legs crossed. The man on his left is a powerful Negro giant with a brilliant red tie and a CIO button in his lapel.

An old conditioning makes the Negro people leave several front benches on one side of the aisle for the whites, but some of the whites turn and talk animatedly with colored folk behind and beside them.

There is no formality of any kind, no call for the people to stand or kneel. Singing begins, and praying, and the people take part to the extent that the spirit moves them, which is considerable. The chairman, sitting in dignified profile, leads most of the hymns and beats time with his foot and also with his hand. The hymns con-

tinue as long as the people desire, different worshipers taking up the lead with any new verse that may occur to them as fitting, the rest of the congregation repeating their words and then returning in rhythmic harmonies to the repetitive.

An hour of singing is enough. The spirit glows within the people and they are ready to hear the speakers: and not only to hear them, but to follow them along with interpolated cries and amens and repeat in chorus the phrases of which they especially approve.

"Bless us, good Lord," says an old preacher who has just taken his place on the platform. The people cry: "Yeah, Lord!"

The old preacher is introduced by the chairman. "Here's a fine preacher who you haven't met or some may have met. I believe I ain't met him myself, I'm sure." He talks simply of love and the people's duty one to the other. The people cry, Amen, very fervently. They say it with trust and openness, as children speak to a beloved father.

A very serious young man and two girls, one wearing a scarlet hat and one clad all in white, sing a three-part rendering of "Rock Me in the Cradle of the Lord." They sway and rock with their arms and hands as they sing the chorus. The people applaud, and stamp with their feet. They are glowing now very warm with the spirit.

The chairman dismisses them for a few minutes of social intercourse out in the yard, where refreshments are ready. The children run in and out once more, and when the people come back into the church they are tired, and the younger ones lie on the benches with heads in their mothers' laps.

There is a hush because a white preacher, who has driven many hours to honor them as chief speaker in

their church meeting, has arrived. He sits in the center chair on the platform, a chair with arms. His lean face is calm, tender and strong. The colored people smile at him, and he smiles at them, as equals smile. The chairman, introducing him, says in a tone of rising emotion:

"We struggle for our rights not with guns . . ."

"No!" cry all the people.

". . . not with fists . . ."

"No!"

". . . not with weapons . . ."

"No, sir!"

". . . but with principles!"

"Amen!"

Now the white preacher leads them in old-time hymns with new words. "When the Union Marches In" is followed by "When the Struggle's Over, We Shall All Be Free, in a New Society." New verse after new verse is improvised from the congregation. The singing dies. The preacher leans down and asks the chairman how long he should speak.

"From now on," says the chairman, smiling blandly. And the preacher begins:

"These are new words for old songs—because we have to build the Kingdom of God on earth. The Kingdom is not *of* this world, but it is *in* this world. What Jesus meant by 'world' was the social order. 'Seek ye an *order* founded upon my principles'—an order of justice and brotherhood for everybody. There is an abundance for all if we seek this order.

"We pray to our Father—not the white man's Father" ["No!"]—"not the black man's father"—["No, man!"]—"but *Our* Father. We ask, Thy will be done on *earth* as it is in heaven. Thy will be done in the union.

"They come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and sit with Abraham and

Isaac.'” [“That’s right!”] “‘For that they might all be one.’ That’s what trade unionism is—the most Christian thing in the world. My lying geography told me there were five races of people in the world: the white race—that was put first because the author of the geography was white; the yellow race, the brown race, the red race, and the black race. But I turned to the Bible and found there is no race, creed or color in Jesus’ religion. There is only one race—the human race.

“In one respect the planter is like God: he’s no respecter of persons. If he can’t rob a black man he’d as soon rob a white man. There’s only one race for him where the profit and loss account is concerned.” [“Shore ’nough! Only one!”] “The Northerner stole the Negro from Africa for money—the Southerner bought him and enslaved him for the same reason.” [“All guilty!”]

“Always they’ve been trying to divide—because then if you won’t do it for fifty cents, the next man will. White is divided from black, men from women, and the American Federation of Labor divides workers into little crafts so that if the hod-carrier on a building strikes, the brick-layer throws a brick at him and scabs. But the unions we need can’t be too big and broad for us. That’s why the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, which did the job of making the nation sharecropper-conscious, got into the CIO as a district of the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America.” [“CIO! One big union!”]

“Now don’t let anyone fool himself. The Negro has a right to be suspicious of the white. The white always thinks he’s gone a long way when he gets to sitting on the same bench or at the same table with a Negro. The Negro maybe doesn’t give him credit for going as far as he has.” [“Amen!”]

“‘Thy will be done,’ we say. It is not God’s will that

men and women and children should toil in the fields from sunup to sundown to grow cotton, and go naked. It is the will of the planter, but it is not God's will." ["Oh no! That's right!"] "It isn't the will of God that five million children should starve, nor that women should marry for a meal-ticket. Nor that girls not married should be forced to sell their bodies for bread." ["Amen! No, man! I *mean!*"] "Nor that fifteen million people should be so weary that God's children are bulging the walls of the insane asylums.

"I'm telling you what God has told me to tell you. And I'm not asking any man's permission to say it. I was jailed in Fort Smith for saying it, beaten at Earle for saying it. I had a church, but when I began to preach the religion of Jesus I was fired." ["Fired!"]

"The planters live like Dives yonder—and we don't even have the *privilege* of lying at his gate like Lazarus and asking. Preachers have been trained to tell you the soul is most important. If you starve to death, your soul will go flying to the pearly gates a hundred million light-years away. But Jesus didn't put it in that order. 'Give us this day our daily bread'—the body first. A body without a spirit is a corpse, and a spirit without a body is a spook, and I've no use for either of them. ["Amen, preacher! Go on, preacher! Hear him now!"]

"Jesus said, 'Blessed are the poor'—why? Because they are the ones that need the Kingdom—they are the ones that will bring it, *because* they need it. He will stop debts and debtors, wipe them all out: there won't be any need for doodlum books and commissaries and robissaries if you receive what you produce.

"I preach this way because it's the way I have to preach." ["Go ahead!"] "They call their sermons good news. This darned stuff they preach isn't good news for the poor. It isn't good news that a man must die before

he can get heaven." ["Sure isn't! Amen! No good news there!"]]

"You know the Government has a health program. You ought to be getting some of it—but are you getting any?" ["No, sir!"] "Why? Because the planters are sitting there listening to some fool preacher preaching the good news! This is red—as red as the blood of Jesus. And that's how red I preach.

"Now there is a new Pentecost in eastern Arkansas. You remember how the fishermen stayed with Jesus three years. Jesus was lynched. They didn't understand. They were told to go to Jerusalem and wait until they got the power. How did they get it? When they became 'of one accord'—when they were organized. It was when they were all agreed together that there *was* power. So Pentecost is unity—a condition met." ["Unity! Amen! Yea, man!"]]

"We are getting this power—now what must we do with it? Well, you know how it is just about the time when cotton must be planted, after the rains. Imagine one bright morning when it's just right for planting. One Monday morning it'll be. Boss-man tells us all to get out in those fields and plant his cotton—and there'll not be a man out in those fields." ["Not one!"] "We can just go to moseying about—we can just go to whistling. Boss-man he comes down into the fields, and we just go on whistling—all whistling. All over the South people going to be sitting on stumps, going to be whistling. Boss-man can't get anyone to work. He goes over here—finds 'em all whistling. He goes over there to the white folks: *they're* all whistling. Boss-man throws a fit, runs to the sheriff—sheriff comes down and finds everybody whistling—all the people. Then boss-man he throws all the fits he's ever thrown in one big fit—but we're just

whistling." ["All whistling! Go on, preacher! Whistling!"]

"Why? Because cotton won't plant itself. Boss can't plant it. He wants it planted, but he can't plant it." ["No, sir! Can't do it! Jest as helpless as a baby!"] "Cotton don't hoe itself. Boss can't hoe it. Cotton don't pick itself, and boss he can't pick it. He can get a machine, but the machine won't run itself. So we go to him and we say: 'Boss-man, you sign this contract!' " ["Sign it, boss! Amen!"]

"Well, we can do it! But it's not going to be easy. Old boss don't care: he don't care if you starve. He's done it. Your babies have starved, and he starved them. His heart isn't going to melt, because he has a heart of stone. He don't care, because if one dies he can get another—unless we have unity. Unless we have the power.

"If we could get all the workers all over the country into the union for that Monday morning. . . . We'd all have been to church Sunday and decided what we were going to do. The whistle would blow all over the country—no, it wouldn't, because a worker blows that whistle, and it'd be a different tune he and the rest of us would be whistling. Not a row would be hoed, not a wheel would turn. In New York the milkboy wouldn't deliver milk. The trains would stand still. We'd all go to playing with the baby and whistling.

"A long time ago in Nazareth a carpenter organized twelve workers—yet today not half the world is Christian. Not one church member in ten is a Christian. But suppose there were only two Christians in all the world." ["Jest two!"] "And each one promised to get just one more Christian every year," ["Come on!"] "At the end of the first year there would be four Christians. In twenty-five years the entire population of the world would be Christian." ["All the world! Amen! Hallelujah!"]

"Now in the union. Suppose five men got a charter. If every one got a member a month, we'd have every worker a member in no time at all. So why wouldn't it be the best thing in the world for everybody to talk union? To talk CIO?" ["I mean! Talk union! Preach union!"]

"That's what we're going to do. It's time we got wise to this thing. We've been acting too long like the bull that was tied to a post. He walked around and around that post and the rope was all the time getting shorter. Finally he was right up to that post with his nose right to the ground. Couldn't move. The bull hasn't got the sense to turn around and go the other way. But we ought to have more sense than a bull. Got to turn around. Got to get converted."

The preacher sits down, and the people stamp their feet and shout Amens. They laugh and move about on the benches, talking together. The chairman rises and says, holding up his hand for a silence that comes immediately:

"I don't know why is, but I just been loving Claude ever since I knew him."

The preacher says: "I love you too, neighbor."

A young Negro on the platform, who is dressed in a white coat and yellow tie and wears glasses, rises to speak:

"You have listen to the lecture that is brought by this God-man, and it brings tears to my eyes to see the conditions that confronts us in this country. Brethren, let me tell you: our condition is serious.

"We are oppressed, not only the Negro race but also the Caucasian race. We are ignorant. I want to tell you that along during the floods here, they brought in two little children of eleven years into Memphis and those chil-

dren didn't even know their own names, nor where they come from.

"Now it's an evidential fact that we will put our hands together. They can't destroy all of us. We will rise and have food. We will rise and have land. We will rise and have homes. We will rise and have raiment.

"I would just like to see the face of any man or woman who wouldn't join this movement. I pray God that these men may put it over. Did you not know that we're tired as a people, to be oppressed, to be hungry? How can we serve God? I can't preach hungry! And what are we going to do?

"It's true *I* can't do nothing. The word 'I' has been used too long. But *we* can do something. Ecclesiastes says he that plougheth in the cold shall not be hungry. But we've been ploughing in the cold *and* heat and we're hungry!

"I'm going to cry out! Somebody must be free! It may not be me, but maybe my sons and my daughters can be free. You should go from this place and call all your friends together and say, 'Come on in!' I know this union is going to stand, because God is at the head of it. Some of us may not be able to reach the promised land—but we're going to make it probable for those that come after we're off the screen. If you just stand together as mens and womens you'll put this problem over."

Another Negro preacher, a weather-beaten old man of middle age, stands at the lectern. He faces towards the part of the church where the white people are sitting, and addresses them in a slow, even voice:

"You lynched us. We're a little shy. We want to know: is you a fact?

"But notwithstanding that you've often fooled us, we'll go along. Don't be afraid. March along. We're going to follow you. For this is the greatest thing ever happened in

America. I've pled for this thing. And I'm willing to tell you people right here"—he turns back to face the Negroes—"that what these white folks told us today came from the heart.

"My friends, we're in church. Let us pray for the success of the union. Let us trust God. Let us pray some. Now this is more than I've ever said—and I'm not afraid. I'm not afraid. My friends, you know that unless conditions in the South change we'll all be slaves.

"We're not going to look at the past sin. Let's forget the past. We'll look forward. My friends, this isn't my lead, it isn't a colored man's lead. It's the white man's lead. It's our follow.

"But I say to you, I'm as good as the white man. I was given a black face as a Christmas present. I'm black because God wanted me black. And I love the white man. The ones that lynch haven't the heart of a beast. But there's savages in all races. There have been more white men beat up over this thing than anything in history.

"I hope you reach your goal. I think you will. For God is a God of long-suffering and love. If the thing is not of God it will go to naught. If it is of God, the world can't stop it."

There is one more speaker. He is bald, with bushy eyebrows, and a voice of extraordinary resonance.

"I don't see white men and black men," he says. "I see just men. I don't ask to be seen but as a man, though ever since I can remember myself I've been black as a crow.

"Now I don't want to follow the white man. There's too many damn bosses already. The scripture says Brother—and Brother don't mean Boss. The white man has got spanked for the union, but the black man has got killed for it."

He turns to where the whites are sitting.

"We don't want to get behind you. Somebody proposed the other day a five-mile march with the Negro behind the white man. I said I would not stand for it. I said I'd stand for a double row, with a row of Negroes marching beside a row of white men. I was feared of trouble, and I didn't want the white man, who was in front, to die for me. If there was going to be dying, I wanted to die with him.

"We won't follow you anywhere, but we'll go with you anywhere. It's not behind you we want to get, but 'side of you. We want to 'scuss together and decide what's best for both.

"We're ready for the big union. We're ready for whatever comes. But let me tell you, brothers and sisters: If you put this over, it means a spank."

The chairman dismisses the people with a blessing.

"I want to thank you for your nice behavior," he says. "You've been very nice."

The people begin to go out. The giant Negro on the chairman's left glances down with an expression of pride at the CIO button in his lapel. A woman near the front, noticing him, is suddenly inspired to lead the congregation in one more hymn.

It is, perhaps, of all the hymns these people have sung through the generations in their cottonfield churches, the one most near to their deepest spirit and tradition. It has in it the lamentation of slave days, the spirit of hope that has never been lost, and also the rhythm of Africa. In a strange highpitched wailing, quite oriental in its fractional tones, the woman sings the first line alone:

What is it that I . . . see yonder coming?

Then the men in the congregation begin almost muttering rather than singing, on a very low note:

Coming—coming—coming—coming—coming.

Twice more the woman repeats her same line, the other women now joining in with her; and each time as they reach the end of the line, the men recommence their deep rhythmic muttering:

Coming—coming—coming—coming—coming.

And then, as all in the church wait for the woman to lead them in the triumphal shout of the line, "It is that old ship of Zion!", the familiar words do not come; and yet the new words she sings are taken up by all just as if they had never known any other.

It is that one . . . great big union!

And the undertone chanting, "union—union—union—union—union" sounds like a great mass of people approaching, crowding, marching, pouring through, men and women, bare feet and shod feet, advancing together toward a shining goal.

And now for the last verse the woman leads the congregation back to the old words of the hymn, just as naturally as she has led the change before:

Jesus paid . . . my transportation.

And the men's rhythm takes it up—

'Tation—'Tation—'Tation—'Tation—'Tation

—louder and louder, nearer and nearer, until all join together exultingly:

Git on board! Git on board! Git on board!

APPENDIX

Lecture Material Accompanying Claude Williams' Charts Referred to in Text

THE PEOPLE'S INSTITUTE OF APPLIED RELIGION Claude Williams, Director

CHART NO. 1 THE GALILEAN AND THE COMMON PEOPLE

(Tentative general outline)

THIS SCRIPT accompanies the above named chart. It is a brief outline of the chart as a whole. There are five charts in this set with brief general outlines for each chart. There are also *complete outlines for the different phases of each chart.*

In reading this chart, begin with the central figure of the top row: **THE CARPENTER.** Next: **THE WORKER'S HOME,** and then **THE TEXT BOOK.** The remainder is read from left to right: **RELIGION; TAKING SIDES; THE CALL; UNITY; etc.**

PLUS SIGNS: The plus signs under the first figure mean that there are other teachings in the Bible not dealt with by any of these charts or lectures. *Every person must always be left free to worship according to the dictates of his conscience!* The purpose of these studies is to help the common people relate the teachings of the prophets and Jesus to **THIS** life.

INTRODUCTION: The religion *OF* Jesus is a man's religion. It is too severe for timid souls and weaklings. That is the reason why there is a religion *ABOUT* Jesus. The religion *OF* the prophets and Jesus is a religion *OF, BY* and *FOR* the toiling masses of humanity. That is why the rich pay the doctors of religion to think out a religion *ABOUT* the prophets and Jesus and the *NEXT* life. Prophetic religion has no good word *TO* nor *FOR* taskmasters and extortioners. It **CONDEMNS** the *OPPRESSORS* and *DEMANDS* that the people be **FREED** from *BONDAGE* and have *LAND* and *HOUSES* and *FOOD* and *CLOTHES* and *HEALTH* and *FREEDOM!*

Any honest reading of the Bible will reveal that in all history God

has been with the people in their struggle against the oppressor and in their fight for *RIGHTEOUSNESS, FREEDOM* and *JUSTICE*. And in the fulfilment of history, God has called out and raised up many great leaders among the toiling multitudes. The history of the Jewish people made it possible for Jesus to become a leader of the common people and to start a movement for a just social order on earth: the Kingdom of God—a real *DEMOCRACY* for all that *LABOR* and are *HEAVY LADEN* and need *REST*! The Jews had been a toiling, rural and suffering people. Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, Zacharias, Anna, Simeon, the Shepherds and others had become aware (as were the prophets before them) of the forces which were crushing the poor.

When Mary knew that she was to become a mother, she declared her *oneness* with those of “low estate” and rejoiced that she was to have a real part in God’s program for the poor of *THIS WORLD*. Jesus had also become aware of these issues early and engaged in a heated discussion with lawyers, doctors and rulers when He was twelve years old. After this, He worked with Joseph at the carpenter’s bench until He was about thirty. During this time He helped to meet the heavy tax burdens and to provide food and raiment for the family, and shared their worry about how to make a living. He learned at first hand the problems of the working people. He studied the history of His nation and read about the great fighters for the people’s rights. This is shown in later years by His many references to Moses, David, Isaiah and other friends of the oppressed.

Born at the time when a decree was sent out from Caesar that the whole world should be taxed, Jesus found the rulers of Rome making arrangements with the slave owners of other nations to increase their slaves by enslaving all the workers and farmers of the world. To defeat this evil, He knew that a worldwide brotherhood of carpenters, farmers, slaves, mechanics, and all toiling people must be set up—without regard to race, tribe or tongue. And in His first message at Nazareth, He declared *HIS oneness* with the afflicted and announced that His purpose on earth was to *carry out* God’s program for the poor, *HERE* and *NOW*.

To be effective in this fight, Jesus realized that a broader approach must be made to the problem than official Israel had undertaken. And He openly stated that He would include in this brotherhood the poor and the needy of other races, as Elias and Eliseus had done in time of famine and plague. The blue bloods of His home town cast Him out of the tabernacle. Then He took his cause directly to the People—laborers, farmers, fishers, and other victims of the world empire. The Son of Man was of the people, knew their problems and spoke their language. The common people heard Him gladly. They swarmed about Him as He entered Jerusalem, where He boldly condemned the world system of His day, its practices and its agents.

Seeing that the whole world was going after this carpenter-prophet, the rulers planned to mob Him. They were afraid to arrest Him on fake charges lest there be an uprising of the people. Therefore, they bargained with the only one of the twelve who was not himself a Galilean, to deliver Him into their hands. Seized at night while the people were asleep, given a mock trial before daybreak, He was crucified at 9 a.m. as a criminal.

When the people learned what had happened, there was an uproar of the multitudes. The rulers, extortioners and priests closed their shutters and hid in the closets. The record says that "the sun was hidden and it was dark at noon."

The people went to the temple and entered the Holy of Holies to settle with the priests for their mockery. Jesus himself had set the example the day He entered the temple, turned over the money tables and lashed the thieves from the house of God. The record says, "the rocks were torn asunder and the veil of the temple rent in twain."

Many prophets of the people and progressive leaders had been recently stoned or crucified. Now, new leaders and speakers and prophets sprang up everywhere. The streets of Jerusalem quivered and the houses shook. It was said, "the earth did quake and even some of the dead arose and were seen by many."

The oppressors had killed the Nazarine, but He had established a movement against which the gates of hell could not prevail!

CHART No. 1

CHART LECTURE

Lesson 1

THE CARPENTER: Let us look at the record. (Turn to the chart.)

The plus signs indicate that one may hold any additional beliefs that the scriptures may teach him. But at least this is true:

Jesus was a carpenter (Mark 6:3). He worked at the carpenter's bench from early childhood until He entered His ministry at the age of thirty (Luke 3:23). He knew what it was to be tired and hungry, to work long hours with little pay, to have horny hands and to wear work clothes.

WORKER'S HOME: Jesus grew up in the home of working people. His mother was of low estate (Luke 1:38). Joseph was a carpenter (Matthew 13:55). Joseph and Mary were very poor (Cf. Luke 2:24 with Leviticus 12:8). They lived in the poorest section of Palestine—Galilee (Matthew 3:13). Jesus knew what it was to sleep on hard beds, live in a poor house, eat scanty food, be insecure. He saw Galileans toiling to make a living and to meet the heavy tax burdens. As the oldest child in a large family (Matthew 6:3 and 13:55) He probably had to face these problems Himself in early childhood.

THE TEXT BOOK: His only text book was the Old Testament in which he read:

- (1) of Moses and his fight to deliver the children of Israel from bondage (Exodus 3:7-10);
- (2) of David who was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22) and who assembled his brethren and all that were in trouble, or were distressed or discontented (1 Samuel, 22:1-2);
- (3) and of Nehemiah, Amos, Hosea, Micah and the other great leaders of the people.

RELIGION: In this book, the carpenter found two types of religion:

- (1) One used by the rulers and a certain school of priests to keep the people in subjection (Jeremiah 23:11-18). He referred to this as the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod (Mark 8:15). *IT IS* an opiate of the people.
- (2) The other used by Moses, Amos, Hosea (Hosea 6:9), Jeremiah and others to condemn that kind of religion, oppose its leaders, fight poverty and champion the cause of the people. (Read books mentioned.)

TAKING SIDES: When He entered His ministry at Nazareth, Jesus followed the preaching of these prophets of the people. He read from the book of Isaiah (Luke 4:17-19). He closed the book and said, "Today is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

"I was sent to bring these very things to pass." He expressed His intention of crossing national lines and uniting the oppressed among all races into one body. He named a leper of Syria and a widow of Sidon to illustrate (Luke 4:26-27). This program struck fear into the hearts of them whose plan was to "divide and govern." They formed a mob to lynch Him. But during their rage He walked calmly out of their midst (Luke 4:17-30) and went to a country town to set up His headquarters (Matthew 9:1), select His disciples (Mark 1:16-17, 2:14), and to begin His work among the impoverished farmers and fishermen (Matthew 4:13-17).

(There are two more Lessons in this general lecture on Chart No. 1.)

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